

# **NEW TOOLS FOR TRAINING NEWS REPORTERS: AN INTERACTIVE SCORING e-TEXTBOOK BASED ON ONLINE ASSESSMENT**

A thesis  
submitted in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
in the  
University of Canterbury

by  
**Yevgenia Munro**

August 31, 2010

---

**This thesis is dedicated to my mother Galina Suslina,  
my husband Robin Munro  
and my first journalism teacher Lloyd Donaldson**

## **Abstract**

This research develops a new approach to the development of training inexperienced journalists in news writing using a web-based platform of instruction delivery. E-training is growing in the world as an instructional setting, and offers not only financial benefits, but also a range of specific advantages over the traditional classroom type of setting. Such advantages include the ability to personalise the content of training to the trainees' current competencies, to facilitate regular multi-faceted monitoring of the changes in these competencies and to combine learning with the immediate practising of what was learned.

Two e-training tools have been created and validated in this research: the news text assessment system (NTA) — a comprehensive and effective online scoring rubric, i.e. a matrix describing different levels of competency in several dimensions of the assessed performance — to assess the quality of news writing; and a scoring e-textbook (SET), an asynchronous news writing training tool. The SET is built around the NTA as its core element and contains hundreds of self-learning modules including exercises, examples, instructional texts, and quizzes to be used in a non-linear fashion according to the specific needs of trainees. Both the exercises and the NTA are elements of corrective feedback, which in psychological literature has been shown to be most effective in changing the subsequent performance of trainees.

The two tools help both the trainee and the instructor. They assist the instructor to identify and address journalists' weak and absent competencies in news writing and consistently upgrade the learning modules when needed. They help trainees to monitor their progress and to learn from their own mistakes in the short periods of spare time they have during their work or in other time they can spare for the training.

To create the NTA, 53 top journalism experts, both practitioners and academics, used the prototype of the assessment rubric with 30 criteria of news writing to assess the quality of several supplied news stories. The results were then subjected to statistical analysis and the NTA rubric was created as a compromise between its comprehensiveness and user-friendliness. To evaluate the NTA and the SET, an experiment was conducted with journalists in one post-Communist country in the form of an action research project, where this researcher was also the instructor. The experiment consisted of four months of training and reflection on its results by both the journalists and the researcher. The results show improvement in news writing competencies to an internationally 'acceptable' news writing standard for most of the trainees. The suggested tools have been well received and the trainees appreciated the interactivity that was provided during the training.

## Acknowledgments

This research would not have been possible without the assistance of many people in many countries. They include those who sponsored my travel, my research and the training that I conducted; those who advised and consulted me, dozens of journalists in six post-Soviet countries who participated in my practical work in journalism e-training that gave the ideas for this project and who later participated in the experiments conducted for this training. They also include my friends in St. Petersburg, Moscow, London, Sydney and Washington and my family in Russia, Belarus, New Zealand, Australia, Finland and Estonia who provided me with love, warm support, inspiration and technical help. It was my programmer nephew Ivan Suslin from Turku in Finland who set up a wonderful training website for me. I am greatly indebted to my husband, Robin Munro, for his help in proofreading my thesis and putting up with the major disruption to his life caused by his wife's endless hours sitting in front of a computer instead of exploring the beautiful country of New Zealand together.

But first and foremost, I am very grateful to the University of Canterbury which provided me with the wealth of its educational resources and the UC doctoral scholarship award.

I am enormously indebted to my chief supervisor, Donald Matheson, who appreciated my idea for this research and who always pushed me into thinking deeper and wider, to present my writing in a greater context, whose critiques never upset but inspired, and whose expertise and kindness supported me through difficult times of my temporary disability and distress during the period of this research and during hardships following two major earthquakes in Christchurch.

My gratitude extends to my second supervisor, professor Jim Tully, who provided advice and contacts, particularly in the early stages, and also to the faculty of the Media and Communication programme at the University of Canterbury, especially Musa Mohammed and Linda Jean Kenix, who were always ready to give advice whenever needed. I am also grateful to my consultant, Alexander Chernyshenko, who used to work at the psychology department of the University of Canterbury and who advised me on the creation of the weighted scoring rubric. I am also indebted to Dawn Miller, PhD student in the political sciences department at the University of Canterbury, who helped me with the statistical analysis.

My sincere gratitude extends to my first journalism teacher, the late Lloyd Donaldson, who taught me the basics of western news journalism when he was editor of the Russia-based *St. Petersburg Press*, an English-language newspaper, when I came to work there virtually off the street. I had then recently quit my job as a pedagogy lecturer in a St Petersburg university

because, during Russia's perestroika, it could not financially support my daughter and myself and I was desperate for another job. My love of journalism and the inspiration I felt over the years I worked as a journalist, then as a journalism trainer, and later as a researcher I owe to Lloyd, who, coincidentally, is a graduate of the University of Canterbury and New Zealander by birth.

I am especially grateful to the Washington-based International Research and Exchange board (IREX) and its representatives in Belarus, Russia, and the republics in the Southern Caucasus and Central Asia, especially to Jean McKenzie and Sheldon Markoff. Jean, who is now training journalists in Afghanistan for IWPR, was the first to recognise the potential of online training in 2000 and provided me with the funds to create a prototype of the online assessment tool and to conduct eight online training projects with journalists in several countries. Markoff tracked me down to conduct a few more training programmes. Overall, I was privileged to train journalists in seven countries of the post-USSR, including training in six online.

Sincere appreciation also goes to the agency in one of these countries in which the experiments for this research were conducted. Unfortunately, I cannot name the country or the agency in this research for fear of possible reprisals against the journalists and the agency. The country is not politically stable and revealing the names could — as the general director of the agency warned me — result in grave consequences for them and the agency.

I am also very grateful to the NZ Journalists Training Organisation, which provided me with a scholarship to participate in an educational conference in Auckland in December, 2006, where I first publicised the online assessment tool. I also thank NZAID for sponsoring my travel to the First World Journalism Education Congress in 2007 in Singapore. I view these awards as a great honour as I take them as recognising the value of my research.

My appreciation also goes to the Florida-based Poynter Institute, which for many years has been a great resource of ideas in both journalism and journalism teaching and that provided me a scholarship which funded my stay in St. Petersburg, Florida, in October 2006, for a seminar for journalism trainers from many countries. Many of these trainers were among the 53 top journalism experts who provided me with invaluable advice and granted several hours from their busy schedule to code news stories with the assessment tool I prepared. I am very grateful to every one of these 53 experts.

I cannot thank enough the staff from the New Zealand Workbridge organisation who organised my work station and provided me with special equipment that helped me to sit and write at the time of my temporary disability.

# Table of Contents

NEW TOOLS FOR TRAINING NEWS REPORTERS: AN INTERACTIVE SCORING e-TEXTBOOK BASED ON ONLINE ASSESSMENT .....	i
Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgments.....	iii
Table of Contents .....	v
List of Tables .....	xi
List of Figures.....	xiii
Introduction .....	1
Glossary .....	7
Learning and training .....	8
Assessment: .....	8
Abbreviations .....	9
Chapter 1. Literature review .....	10
Introduction.....	10
1.1. Journalism in the era of globalisation and a communications revolution: Can news writing values become universal? .....	11
1.1.1. Journalism training in countries of the Second and Third World. What is being taught .....	11
1.1.2. Expectations and disappointments. Media cannot change alone .....	18
1.1.3. The reality: two parallel journalism paradigms .....	20
1.1.4. Context matters .....	22
1.1.5. Will the 'global news journalist' emerge?.....	24
1.2. Journalists need training.....	26
1.3. Online instructional setting (e-training) .....	30
1.3.1. Why online: Advantages and drawbacks of online instructional setting.....	31
1.3.2. Online courses in journalism and feedback during these courses.....	35
1.4. Assessment and feedback.....	41
1.4.1. Assessment in learning and training .....	41
1.4.2. Assessment of writing in journalism .....	44
1.4.3. Scoring rubrics in assessment of learning outcomes .....	49
1.5. From paper-based textbooks to learning objects .....	73
1.5.1. Chunking learning objects .....	75
1.5.2. Classification and storing learning objects for reuse .....	76
1.5.3. Upgrading feedback to the status of learning objects for larger learning experiences .....	79

1.6. Framing the discussion.....	80
Conclusions.....	81
Hypotheses.....	82
Chapter 2. Methodology and Organisation of the Research and the Experiment .....	84
Introduction.....	84
2.1. Creation of the first version of the NTA .....	85
2.2. Scaling the news texts assessment system .....	88
2.3. Organisation of the experiment.....	92
2.4. Issues considered when designing the experiment.....	94
2.4.1. Organisation of the online training experiment .....	100
2.4.2. Instructional supervision and communication .....	101
2.4.3. The duration of the experiment .....	102
2.4.4. Explanation of the absence of a control group.....	102
Chapter 3. Designing the news texts assessment system .....	104
Introduction.....	104
3.1. Creating categories to assess the quality of news texts.....	105
3.1.1. Categories as represented in books on journalism.....	106
3.2. Newsworthiness.....	111
3.2.1. Timeliness.....	113
3.2.2. Importance.....	124
3.2.3. Proximity .....	130
3.2.4. Prominence .....	134
3.2.5. Unexpectedness.....	135
3.2.6. Conflict .....	137
3.2.7. General interest .....	139
3.3. Factual quality and credibility .....	140
3.3.1. Accuracy .....	143
3.3.2. Objectivity as a method .....	158
3.3.3. Comprehensiveness.....	179
3.3.4. Description of sources .....	181
3.3.5. Description of the circumstances of getting information .....	186
3.3.6. Attribution to sources .....	190
3.4. Meaning.....	196
3.4.1. Context.....	202
3.4.2. Explanations .....	215
3.4.3. Impact .....	219
3.4.4. Voices of people in the street .....	225

3.5. Style.....	227
3.5.1. Reporter's voice .....	229
3.5.2. Use of details.....	230
3.5.3. Use of language.....	232
3.5.4. Use of quotes.....	239
3.5.5. Grammar and spelling.....	243
3.6. Structure .....	245
3.6.1. Matching a standard of a news story .....	249
3.6.2. Intro.....	249
3.6.3. Focus.....	254
3.6.4. Substantiation block.....	256
3.6.5. Transitions, logical links.....	257
3.6.6. Ending.....	258
<i>Summary</i> .....	259
3.7. Conclusion .....	260
Chapter 4. Developing the NTA.....	263
4.1. Results .....	265
4.1.1. Factors after the rotation.....	265
4.1.2. The combined criteria .....	269
4.1.3. The rejected criteria .....	270
4.1.4. The criteria that kept their original content .....	271
4.2. Scaling the NTA .....	271
4.2.1. Discussion of the results .....	274
4.2.2. Fine-tuning of the NTA .....	275
Conclusions.....	277
Chapter 5. Creation of a virtual textbook based on a scoring rubric to use in training of news reporters .....	279
Introduction.....	279
5.1. The organisation of the SET .....	281
5.1.1. Coding system.....	281
5.1.2. Hyperlinks in instructional texts .....	287
5.1.3. Placement of the codes in news texts .....	289
5.1.4. Assessment .....	291
5.1.5. Self-training assisted by SET .....	293
5.1.6. Interactivity .....	295
5.1.7. Instructional supervision.....	296
Conclusions.....	297
Chapter 6. Results of the experiment .....	298



6.1. Work done by the trainees during the online training .....	299
6.1.1. Statistics on the work done during the training.....	299
6.1.2. Changes in the level of news writing competencies .....	300
6.1.3. Frequently repeated mistakes and ways to deal with them .....	302
6.1.4. Frequently repeated mistakes .....	305
6.2. Relevance of writing news according to western standards to Azerbaijan news journalism .....	307
6.3. The trainees' assessment of the online training elements .....	308
6.3.1. Examples .....	309
6.3.2. Exercises .....	310
6.3.3. Hyperlinks .....	311
6.3.4. Instructional materials .....	311
6.3.5. Rewriting a piece of text in own stories .....	312
6.3.6. Quizzes .....	313
6.3.7. Using the NTA to assess the quality of stories .....	314
6.3.8. Tracking their progress .....	315
6.3.1. Reading marked stories .....	315
6.3.2. Reading other journalists' marked stories .....	316
6.3.1. The completeness of the use of the SET.....	317
6.4. Opinions about the usefulness of other components of the online training .....	317
6.4.1. Training diary .....	317
6.4.2. Contest for the best story .....	318
6.4.3. Quality of communication with the instructor .....	318
6.5. Timing of different tasks during the training .....	319
6.5.1. Time spent on reading marked stories .....	319
6.5.2. Time spent on reading one learning material .....	320
6.5.3. Time spent on doing one exercise .....	320
6.5.4. What journalists want additional time for during the training .....	321
6.6. Assessment of the achievements during online training .....	321
6.6.1. The most important knowledge and skills obtained at the training .....	321
6.6.1. Issues that remained unclear after the training.....	322
6.7. Problems encountered by the trainees during online training.....	322
6.7.1. The most complicated issues of the training .....	322
6.7.2. Perceived deficiencies of the e-training as an educational setting.....	323
6.7.3. Psychological difficulties of the e-training .....	325
6.7.4. The trainees' reasoning of why they did not quit the training when it became too difficult .....	325
6.8. Self-assessment of own improvement and satisfaction with the online training.....	326

6.8.1. Comparison of the pre-training and post-training ability to write news.....	326
6.8.2. Satisfaction with the results of the training .....	326
6.9. Suggestions by the graduates on how to improve training .....	327
6.9.1. Improvements for online training .....	327
6.10. The instructor's time .....	327
Conclusions.....	327
Chapter 7. Discussion of the results of the experiment.....	330
7.1. The length and the mode of training sessions.....	332
7.2. Hyperlinks.....	333
7.3. Transfer of new knowledge into practice.....	336
7.3.1. The complexity of news writing skills.....	336
7.3.2. Conditions of training.....	337
7.3.3. Lack of practice.....	338
7.3.4. Problems in the instructional design.....	340
7.4. Language problems .....	341
7.5. Procrastination .....	342
7.6. Interaction, communication .....	343
7.7. The use of the SET and the future of digital textbooks.....	344
7.8. Use of the NTA.....	346
7.9. Applicability of western news writing standards in post-Communist countries .....	352
Conclusions .....	354
Limitations of the Research.....	359
Concluding remarks .....	363
REFERENCES .....	366
Appendix 1. Articles used for assessment by journalism experts.....	394
Appendix 2. Instruction for coders .....	405
Appendix 3. News Texts Assessment (NTA1) .....	405
Appendix 4. Analysis of criteria of newsworthiness .....	414
Appendix 5. Tweets by Schlesinger .....	422
Appendix 6. Analysis of elements of style in journalism news writing.....	423
Appendix 7. Only Human Wreckage is left in Village of Karubamba.....	426
Appendix 8. An excerpt from the NTA ('impact' criterion).....	429
Appendix 9. The Associated Press story .....	430
Appendix 10. Data from the interviews of the graduates of the online training.....	431
Appendix 11. Ellie's assessment portfolio .....	447
Appendix 12. Helen's assessment portfolio .....	449
Appendix 13. Julia's assessment portfolio .....	450

Appendix 14.	Transcript of an ICQ conversation between Julia and the instructor. Nov, 28, 2008	452
Appendix 15.	Transcript of an ICQ conversation between Richard and the instructor. Oct. 6, 2008	455
Appendix 16.	A handout for reporters on the different variety of contexts .....	457

## List of Tables

Table 1. Assessment of the quality of news stories at the University of Southern Illinois.....	47
Table 2. Guiding principles of constructing a scoring rubric.....	85
Table 3. Information about the participants in the experiment.....	93
Table 4. Organisational and didactical principles of online learning and training, conditions and suggestions that help to make it successful.....	95
Table 5. Chapters in journalism textbooks.....	107
Table 6. Elements and descriptors for the criterion ‘proximity’.....	131
Table 7. Elements and descriptors for the criterion ‘unexpectedness’.....	135
Table 8. Elements and descriptors for the criterion ‘Objectivity as a method’.....	163
Table 9. Elements of the criterion ‘attribution to sources except attribution in the intro’.....	194
Table 10. Context types and their location in news stories as suggested by journalism experts.....	206
Table 11. Analysis of the contents of the nut graf in the story by a Pulitzer prize winner Mark Fritz.....	212
Table 12. Uncontroversial elements and descriptors for the criterion ‘use of language’.....	235
Table 13. Elements and descriptors for the criterion ‘use of quotes’ of the NTA1.....	240
Table 14. Elements and descriptors for the criterion ‘intro’.....	250
Table 15. Item information.....	265
Table 16. Weightings of the categories and numerical ratings for the criteria in the NTA.....	272
Table 17. Weighted NTA.....	273
Table 18. Adding major fines to the NTA.....	276
Table 19. The scheme of the NTA.....	282
Table 20. Example of an instructional material with hyperlinks in its body <b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>	
Table 21. Statistics on different kinds of work during the training.....	299
Table 22. The results of the experiment.....	301
Table 23. Top five repetitive mistakes.....	302
Table 24. Trainees’ perceptions of the complexity of the news writing criteria.....	304
Table 25. Assessment of the elements of the SET and other elements of online training.....	309
Table 26. News texts assessment.....	405
Table 27. Newsworthiness criteria in literature.....	414
Table 28. Elements of style in news writing.....	423
Table 29. Reporters’ opinions about repetitive mistakes.....	431
Table 30. What Julia should have done with the marked copy to process the mistakes.....	432
Table 31. Relevance of western news writing values for Azerbaijan.....	433
Table 32. Assessment of examples in the instructional files in the SET.....	433
Table 33. Assessment of exercises in the instructional files in the SET.....	434
Table 34. Assessment of hyperlinks in the instructional materials in the SET.....	434
Table 35. Assessment of the quality of instructional materials in the SET.....	435
Table 36. Assessment of the usefulness of the task in which trainees rewrote a piece of text in the stories in which they made mistakes.....	435
Table 37. Assessment of the quality of quizzes.....	436
Table 38. The trainees’ opinions about assessing stories.....	436
Table 39. Opinions about the opportunity to follow own progress.....	437
Table 40. Assessment of the quality of marking stories with the help of SET.....	437
Table 41. Assessment of the expediency of reading other journalists’ marked stories.....	438
Table 42. The completeness of the use of the main elements in the SET.....	438
Table 43. Assessment of usefulness of a training diary.....	439
Table 44. Assessment of the contest for the best story.....	439
Table 45. Assessment of the quality of communication with the instructor.....	440
Table 46. Time spent on reading marked stories.....	440
Table 47. Time spent on reading one learning material.....	441

Table 48. Time spent on doing one exercise.....	441
Table 49. What would journalists want additional time for.....	442
Table 50. The most important knowledge and skills obtained at the training .....	442
Table 51. Listing of the issues that remained unclear after the training.....	443
Table 52. The most complicated issues of the training .....	443
Table 53. Deficiencies of the e-training .....	444
Table 54. Psychological difficulties of the e-training.....	444
Table 55. If it was so difficult, why didn't you quit? .....	445
Table 56. Comparison of the pre-training and post-training ability to write news as perceived by trainees.....	445
Table 57. Satisfaction with the results of the training .....	446
Table 58. Suggestions by the graduates on how to improve training.....	446
Table 59. Assessments for Ellie's news stories during the online training <sup>a</sup> .....	447
Table 60. Assessments for Helen's news stories during the online training.....	449
Table 61. Assessments for Julia's news stories during the online training.....	450
Table 62. Assessments for Julia's news stories filed after completion of the online training.....	451
Table 63. Different types of contextual and explanatory information in news stories <sup>a</sup> .....	<b>Error!</b>

**Bookmark not defined.**

## List of Figures

Figure 1. The 'scientific approach' construct of a scoring rubric to assess poster presentation (Allen & Tanner, 2006) .....	53
Figure 2. Rubric assessing the quality of a science journal <sup>a</sup> (Tierney & Simon, 2004).....	54
Figure 3. The initial part of an analytic rubric assessing the criterion 'organisation of a science journal' (Tierney & Simon, 2004) .....	55
Figure 4. Example of part of an instructional rubric outlining criterion 'organisation' of a persuasive essay (Goodrich Andrade, 2000). The levels of quality (left to right) are: 4, 3, 2, 1 .....	58
Figure 5. A rubric to assess the presentation of a research project.....	59
Figure 6. Part of the generic rubric to assess writing.....	60
Figure 7. Part of an example of a rubric to assess discussion posting.....	60
Figure 8. The schema of scaling the NTA.....	90
Figure 9. Comparison of accuracy of news stories in 1985 and 2009 in the USA .....	144
Figure 10. Example of the representation <sup>a</sup> of the criterion 'impact' in the NTA <sup>b</sup> .....	283
Figure 11. Example of the instructional material in the module coded 1323b1: Paragraph unnecessarily begins with reference to a source .....	286
Figure 12. Example of coding a news text .....	290
Figure 13. Example of assessment by SET as seen by the trainee .....	291
Figure 14. Example of assessment by SET as made by the instructor .....	292
Figure 15. Example of the training design .....	294
Figure 16. Example of an interactive exercise .....	296
Figure 17. List of Julia's mistakes in her 5 <sup>th</sup> story filed for the training .....	306
Figure 18. Label for a plagiarised article prepared by a blogger .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Figure 19. Label for a press-release posing as a news article prepared by a blogger.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Figure 20. The 'impact' criterion of the NTA.....	429

## Introduction

In the autumn of 1998 I was asked to co-teach a workshop in Belarus with a journalism trainer colleague from the United States. The subject was “The basics of news reporting” – the most popular topic of training in post-Communist countries in the first decade after the collapse of the USSR. At the end of the three-day training one of the participants approached me. I could not believe my eyes – she was crying.

“I was about to leave journalism for good,” she said. “But now that I understood what news is about I will stay.”

I asked why she was so emotional and she said that her editors pressured her not to write news, but her opinion about news. “Where was I supposed to get my opinion from? I just do not have any,” she said and added that reporting facts the way we taught her sounded much more like journalism than brainwashing people with the opinions of the writers of news.

There was one other crucial point in my first experience as a journalism trainer. When several weeks later, the same participants gathered at a follow-up seminar, at which they were supposed to present their news stories for discussion, my American co-trainer and I got a shock. None of the journalists had followed what we had taught them apart from getting rid of their opinions in news stories. But the stories were mostly about ‘events that took place’. The intros were mostly horrible — largely about those who were presiding at these events. There was little attribution, structure or context. Was our teaching that bad?

To let the reader imagine the extent of the problem with news reporting one typical short news story is cited here. The story was written in a local newspaper in the city of Osh, the second biggest in the south of the Central Asian country of Kyrgyzstan in 2003:

The fulfillment of the regional budget for 2003 was the focus of discussion at the scheduled 19<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Osh district council. Head of the district financial department J. Turgunbayev reported on the matter. Head of the employment department A. Ibrayev informed those present at the meeting about the situation with the current employment status of the population. In addition, the deputies reviewed some other issues, and relevant decisions on them were taken.<sup>1</sup>

The story lacks any substance or context and is boring to say the least. Apart from these deficiencies, many other problems in the quality of news writing are mentioned by media researchers in post-Communist countries (Masterton, 1992b; Voltmer, 2000):

- lack of accuracy or verification of facts, sloppy reporting
- lack of scepticism about what officials say

---

<sup>1</sup> Full text of a news story, published in newspaper *Slovo Osha*

- lack of sources, no people speaking
- lack of focus or structure
- boring, general and official-style writing
- advertisements or corporate announcements posing as new stories
- reporting opinions instead of facts
- mixing facts and opinions
- one-sided reporting, lack of fairness or balance
- quoting facts instead of judgments, comments and opinions
- absence of expert comments.

After the collapse of communism in the Soviet Union many seminars on journalism training such as the one noted above were conducted in the former USSR and in Eastern Europe by western professionals in which they tried to upgrade the standards of reporting. The *Economist* wrote that from 1991 to 2007 about 3,000 training courses were conducted for journalists in developing and transitional countries globally. But the results were hardly noticeable. “[T]he need for basic reporting skills is still central,” Joe Foote, co-chair of the World Journalism Education Council<sup>2</sup> has noted (cited in *Emerging journalism*, 2007, p. 71).

When I was already working on this thesis I came across the same question — “Was my teaching that bad?” — asked by a Norwegian journalism trainer who was disappointed at the lack of reaction from an audience of journalists from the Baltic states to his lecturing ((Lauk (2009), see more in section 1.1.1). The problem, the trainer believed, was that the audience was ideologically unprepared to accept the new values and standards he taught (ibid).

I had a different idea. Being brought up in the same culture as the Baltic reporters, but professionally belonging to western news journalism<sup>3</sup>, I knew that there was nothing wrong with the values and standards being taught and there was no political or ideological resistance. In fact, the post-Communist countries — and, especially the Baltic states, which consider their time under Soviet rule to be an occupation — were looking forward to the introduction of western values in many spheres of public life and the economy from polite treatment in the service sector to selling national products under westernised names so that they would look more attractive. The resistance, to my mind as not only a journalist but also a trained educator, was mainly cognitive. Journalists simply had no conceptual framework to which they could have added the new approaches taught by the westerners. Instead, they had rather rigid concepts deeply rooted in the professional practices of the previous regimes. The old concepts needed to be destroyed to allow the new ones to develop. This process could not

---

<sup>2</sup> A network of 28 journalism education associations representing six continents

<sup>3</sup> I worked for the English-language Russian-based newspapers The St. Petersburg Times and The Moscow Times from 1993 to 2003



happen overnight or even at a workshop of a few days' length because of the complexity of the new competencies to learn. A "whole spectrum" of elements would have to be "laboriously learned" (Tomalin, 1975, p. 77, quoted in Franklin, 2006, p. 76). So planning the training would have to take into account that a lot of time would be needed to obtain and train new competencies — even more time than to develop new skills from scratch. I was prepared to embark on a long journey and develop a news training course to be taught long-term. An online setting was chosen as the delivery platform that had the potential to integrate such courses in daily routines and provide the framework in which professional mentality and approaches would slowly change.

At the beginning of the 2000s, e-training of journalism was relatively uncommon and there was no practice of conducting long e-training courses. The most popular courses that appeared after 2005 were short courses at NewsU, founded by the renowned journalism training centre, the Poynter Institute of Media Studies, in Florida. NewsU courses quickly became so successful that in 2005, its first year, more than 15,000 journalists from 157 countries registered on its site to take up to 25 different short-term courses (Krueger, 2006). By 2009 over 100,000 journalists from more than 200 countries were signing up to take what had grown to 85 NewsU courses. Feedback showed that 76 percent of users considered the training helpful (Krueger, 2009). Most of the NewsU courses are one-off interactive learning experiences on particular subjects. Examples are "News sense: The building blocks of news" or "The lead lab". These courses, which have built-in tools to compare the trainee's answers with the "correct" ones, are not designed for interaction with a trainer or for monitoring of progress of users' quality of writing during the course. Some of the courses are merely digitised copies of textbooks. For example, the course "The writer's workbench: 50 tools you can use" is almost an exact copy of the book *Writing tools* (Roy Peter Clark, 2006). I have not been able to find any other e-training programmes that ensure progress in news writing as a result of training towards some specifically stated learning outcomes.

In my career as an e-trainer, I taught journalists from Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Russia, Ukraine and Uzbekistan both at short-term seminars, long-term e-training programmes and using a combination of both. My first experience was very laborious, time-consuming, and frustrating because marking news texts journalists sent to the training websites took a lot of time, but journalists kept repeating the same mistakes, apparently failing to attend to my suggestions. To engage them more, I decided to introduce a simple dichotomous (yes or no) grading system of whether certain elements of news writing were present or absent from the texts. Slowly, this system grew to 190 elements to be assessed and explained to reporters. It became a torture for me as a trainer. As for the journalists, they enjoyed deep and wide feedback on their stories, but often argued with me whether or not a

certain element was present or missing from their story. I understood that a yes-no system is insufficient, and I needed a scale of several levels of quality in the performance of each element, and some justified weighting of each assessment chunk.

I also badly needed a better system of pre-typed comments that I could use instead of having to repeat the same things time and again. Slowly, the set was prepared and grew, and another type of self-torture came into existence: I could not easily find the needed comment in my files. As a practitioner, I seemed to have reached a dead end. There were not a lot of useful recommendations in the literature available to a practitioner. I understood the time had come to draw upon academic approaches to news writing and the wider academic literature on training and assessment to solve such problems.

I needed to create a taxonomy of the elements of news writing, prepare a user-friendly assessment system, and create a teaching tool that would allow easy access for journalists to the needed content, and a coding system that would allow me to link the deficiencies in news texts in one system with the assessment and instructional materials. In other words, I set off to create an instructionally friendly and pedagogically sound e-training programme.

The first of these tasks was enormous. “Beginning journalists are often bewildered by the sheer number of rules they are asked to follow in constructing a news story,” writes Fox (2001, p. 3). Indeed, while most importantly journalists should be able to present news stories in appropriate formats in a timely, clear, fair, accurate and interesting fashion (Scanlan, 2000a), the set of skills they need includes interviewing skills (Sedorkin & McGregor, 2002; 2008a, p. vii; 2008b, 2008e) the ability to work under stress and pressure and to be able to meet deadlines (Elliott, 1986; Granato, 1991); the willingness to share a set of professional and ethical values (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001)<sup>4</sup> and the acquisition of ‘a nose for news’, a mysterious quality for lay people (Berkowitz, 1997; Tuchman, 1972). Teaching it all online is a task perhaps impossible for one researcher. Therefore, to keep the job manageable, e-training of the elements of news writing was identified as the main topic of this research, although other aspects of the job are discussed as they become relevant to news writing.

It should be acknowledged that among many ways news reports can be written, the style practised by Anglo-American media was chosen as the basis to develop the online training. It was done for three main reasons. Firstly, Masterton (1991) surveying journalists from 67 countries established that reporters share news values that for a range of reasons also constitute the core of Anglo-American news journalism. These include interest, timeliness, clarity, significance, proximity, conflict, human interest, novelty and prominence. Secondly, I

---

<sup>4</sup> Tom Rosenstiel is director of the Washington-based Project for Excellence in Journalism

practised Anglo-American values, style and standards of news writing for 10 years in Russia, and local readers often acknowledged that to get accurate, balanced, fair and interesting news they have to turn to the English-language publications in which I worked. The third reason is the amount of theory on which Anglo-American style of news writing is based. While various aspects of western news journalism are often criticised for breaches when it comes to practice (Downey & Kaiser, 2003), the basics and the theory behind these practices are well developed.

The thesis consists of 7 chapters. In the literature review (Chapter 1), the classical and modern literature on the need to train reporters is analysed, and the main instruments of teaching and training online are assessed. In Chapter 2 the methodology and organisation of the research are presented.

Chapter 3 describes the process of creating the news texts assessment scoring rubric, or NTA1 (the first version of what would later be developed into a more concise final version, or the NTA) by means of analysing professional and academic literature on news writing and also using previous experiences of this researcher in training journalists online.

In Chapter 4, the more user-friendly and shorter version of the NTA was created after the NTA1 was subjected to statistical analysis. Criteria which appeared to have similar meanings were combined and criteria with insufficient distinctions were rejected.

Chapter 5 outlines the process of preparing the scoring e-textbook, or SET, which went well beyond merely digitising pages of textbooks. It has been designed as a myriad of learning modules – small chunks of instructional materials with examples combined with exercises, quizzes, questions for self-reflection, and links to other instructional materials. It also provided a forum with the trainer. All these modules were attached to the NTA by a special double-purpose coding system allowing an online instructor to easily recover and insert any needed instructional module in relevant places of news texts, and they allow the trainee to retrieve these modules and use them for self-regulated training by simply clicking on the code.

Chapter 6 describes the results of the experiment in which the NTA and the SET were tested on a group of news reporters. Chapter 7 discusses the results.

The thesis finishes with conclusions and a discussion of the limitations of the research and future directions for the research.

The tools for e-training in news writing that have been prepared in this research can be equally used for print, online and news agency journalism firstly, because “journalistic standards and reporting techniques should remain the same” for print and web news stories

(Harrower, 2007, p. 154). Other authors of textbooks on online reporting also suggest that there is no difference in standards and values used for news reporting on different platforms, which means that with certain modifications, this approach to training in news writing can be used for broadcast journalists. While the style and the presentation may differ, “careful and unbiased reporting, using compelling writing” are a must (Ward, 2002, p. 122). Journalists have “the responsibility to the fundamentals of news reporting. Facts need the same level of checking they get for the print edition” (Briggs, 2007).

The tools developed in this research do not pretend to solve all the problems in training journalists to write news. For instance, they contribute little to the development of reporting or interviewing techniques. However, the NTA and the SET, if used skillfully, may provide a contribution to the development of news writing skills without the physical presence of an instructor in the editorial office as they allow for the delivery of self-regulated training at any time, any place and any pace. If expanded in content, the tools may be used not only for training inexperienced reporters (or, equally, journalism students), but also at the intermediate and advanced levels, leading even seasoned journalists to higher levels of professional achievement.

The alternative to improving the quality of news writing may cost societies dear, especially in transitional and development countries. Only the lack of objectivity — one of many elements which was part of the online training — can impair “the media’s democratic function to provide the citizens with comprehensive information” which is “more important in times when misinformation and manipulation are still common practice among politicians”, and may cause “a decline in readership and economic losses in the long run” (Votmer, 2000, p. 495). As I argued in a journal paper produced during the course of the research:

If journalists in developing countries are to rigidly stick to their inherited habits, including accepting lies as a norm or making alliances with authorities, instead of becoming their watchdogs, democratic change has little chance (Munro, 2006).

## Glossary

**News:** News is a timely account of a recent, interesting, and significant event (Kershner, 2004). News is also information people need to make sound decisions about their lives (Mencher, 1994)

**Hard news:** Generic term for several types of news stories with significant timeliness, importance and interest characteristics. The definitions have been developed to apply to print or online publications. The types may overlap:

- **Breaking news** is a story about news that has just happened or is just beginning to unfold (planned or unplanned). It can embrace the category of spot news, if spot news is delivered while unfolding.
- **Continuing news** is a prescheduled series of important events occurring over a period of time, such as the passing of a bill, court hearings, diplomacy or war. Can be treated as breaking news if delivered when it has just occurred
- **Current news** is a publication on a matter of current concern, or important issue, or a trend, which has some kind of a news peg
- **Developing news** (also called follow-ups, or running news) is second and other accounts of a significant ongoing or unfolding event.
- **Exclusive news** is a unique publicly important story
- **News analysis** is a timely story focusing on analysis of different viewpoints on a topical issue or a matter of public concern
- **News feature** is an in-depth timely story focusing on details of a current topical issue or a matter of public concern
- **Planned news** is news from an event about which media knew in advance, including news from public events, news conferences, court appearances, campaign speeches, or information from press releases. Could be turned into unplanned news, if a fresh important angle is found
- **Pseudo-news** is news from or about pre-staged events or reported from press releases or other handouts, which are delivering one-sided managed messages from interested parties with no or unclear public importance
- **Recent disclosure** is a story based on an old but important or interesting event or occurrence, which was just made public
- **Spot news** is unexpected hard news (disasters, accidents, robbery, murder, fire, unpredictable death of a famous person, a terrorist bombing, a school shooting). Can be breaking, if delivered while unfolding
- **Utterance** is a story based on what a very important person just said
- **Unplanned news** is unexpected hard news except news on disasters, crime and other tragic occurrences, listed in spot news category
- **What-a-story** is a type of story, which scores highly on many of the newsworthiness values and is, first of all, completely unexpected and extremely important. It is different from the 'breaking news' type regarding the specific set of editorial practices of handling it (Tuchman, 1973), but not regarding its structure or application of journalism values and standards. As from this point of view this type of a story does not have distinctions, this type of hard news will not figure in this research.

## **Learning and training**

**E-learning** (aka online, distance, virtual, web-based, computer-mediated conferencing or instruction, computer-assisted instruction, and asynchronous instruction) – educational setting in which the learner is not physically located on-campus

**E-training** (aka online, distance, virtual, web-based) – educational setting in which the trainee is not physically located in the same place as the instructor

**Virtual textbook** (aka e-textbook, etextbook, online textbook, digital textbook) – a textbook that can be accessed through the Internet

## **Assessment:**

**Scoring rubric** – a tool which contains criteria and rating scales that allow the most important components of complex performances to be described and assessed

**Criteria** – elements of competencies on which the performance of learners or trainees are being evaluated. They describe what the coders should look at to judge the quality of what is assessed.

**Categories** – classes of criteria possessing some common qualities

**Level of performance** – gradations of quality in the assessed performance (‘unacceptable’, ‘good’, ‘outstanding’, etc.)

**Descriptors** – narrative chunks of text that describe the evidence on which the assessed work is judged across criteria and levels of performance

## **Abbreviations**

**NTA** – a generic name for a news texts assessment system. A scoring rubric, or grid, consisting of many criteria, each represented by descriptors, classed into 5 levels of quality.

**NTA1** – The first version of the NTA with 30 criteria, constructed as a result of the analysis of literature

**NTA** – the second version of the NTA with 13 criteria constructed as a result of applying correlation and factor analysis to the data, obtained when NTA1 was tested with the participation of 23 highly qualified journalism experts

**SET** – scoring e-textbook. An online-based textbook, which is interlinked with the NTA, and which contains various types of instructional materials for self-regulated training and means to discuss difficulties with the distant trainer.

# Chapter 1. Literature review

## Introduction

In the first chapter I made an effort to contextualise and theoretically underpin this research because of several theoretical and practical concerns regarding training news writing in developing and transitional countries and online training as an increasingly popular means of improving professional skills in the modern world.

First, the place of news writing is contextualised in the bigger picture of national journalisms. I will analyse whether the heated debate of the last decades of the 20th century about cultural differences in various journalisms of the world equally applies to news writing. Can western, or, more precisely, Anglo-American news writing criteria and standards, which were the subject of extensive research in the past century, be applied to the same extent to news writing of the countries of the Second<sup>5</sup> and the Third World? While it is generally agreed that journalism varies greatly from country to country, including between western countries, I will show that news journalism is becoming increasingly universal by adopting similar standards, primarily the standards of Anglo-American news journalism. Equally, the practice of training news reporters in transitional and developing countries that has been established in recent decades involves retraining journalists from the standards and behaviours formerly used under mostly authoritarian, political regimes into western news standards and behaviours. This analysis laid the foundation for the rest of the thesis by approving the benchmarks and basic approaches to the development of online news training tools that were prepared in this research.

In the next sections the online training is contextualised among various aspects of teaching and training news writing. Principles of online training in other professions were analysed to find out whether long-term online training for journalists can be built on the examples of successful application of online training and teaching designs approved in other industries. The predecessors of the tools that have been prepared in this research are analysed - various versions of feedback, assessments, learning objects and their storing, and digital textbooks are discussed. The benefits and drawbacks of online training are analysed along with the existing options of online training in news writing to demonstrate their problems and the directions towards improvement.

---

<sup>5</sup> The term Second World used to refer to the Soviet Union and its allies in Central Europe. Since the collapse of the USSR most Central European countries have joined the European Union, but most are still economically weak and politically unstable. Some authors consider the BRIC group, consisting of Brazil, Russia, India and China, and also Argentina and Mexico to belong to the Second World as their economic status is higher than that of the Third World.



Overall, the chapter prepares the reader to understand the reasons for this research project and the current situation with platforms and tools for training news writing.

## **1.1. Journalism in the era of globalisation and a communications revolution: Can news writing values become universal?**

### *1.1.1. Journalism training in countries of the Second and Third World. What is being taught*

No one would argue that differences exist between countries in their economic sphere, political establishment and cultural norms. Not surprisingly, therefore, journalism in different countries functions according to different standards and journalists have a variety of values. Even in western countries the standards and values of journalism are not the same (De Burgh, 2005; Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Weaver & Wu, 1998). De Burgh (2005) notes that there is nothing wrong with countries having different journalism standards and values. This section argues that the fashion for identifying different journalisms in different places neglects the extent to which there is a core set of criteria, and that close attention to the practical experience of journalism trainer.

Os shows the value they place on criteria most often found in western news training materials.

Jan Jiráček, a Czech educator<sup>6</sup>, summarised the model of journalism and journalism education in Communist Czechoslovakia, naming propaganda as a “core part of journalism”:

The general backbone of the curriculum was formed by the history of journalism and linguistics. The courses in marxist-leninist philosophy and related subjects were an obligatory part of any university curriculum. Checking sources, balanced coverage, independence, professional ethics, law etc. were unknown concepts in the journalistic curriculum ... The vocational training played the minor role in the journalistic education and was mostly concentrated on ‘creativity’, i.e. creative writing skills, style and genres in print journalism, pronunciation, speech skills and some basics of handling camera and editing in audio-visual media (Jiráček, 1997, p. 49).

This description by Jiráček equally applies to any other country of the former Soviet block. So if there is nothing wrong with journalism in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, or in Asia, Africa, Latin America, then why did university curriculums dramatically change in these countries<sup>7</sup>, and why were western trainers flocking there en masse to retrain local

---

<sup>6</sup> Jiráček is Former Chairman of the Czech Television Council, editor of KMIT Quarterly, and currently professor in the Department of Mass Communication in the Faculty of Social Sciences, and Deputy Chair of the Center for Media Studies at Charles University.

<sup>7</sup> For example, in the Czech Republic, according to Jiráček (1997), the journalism school was closed and a completely new one was created with the help of journalism educators from Western Europe and the United States. Its programme was “based upon the concept of the free press in the open society,

reporters in the 1990s? Jiráček wrote that his colleagues from Western Europe and the United States, who helped to rewrite the university curriculum for journalism education “stressed the necessity to improve the standards of vocational training as a condition sine qua non for any further development of journalistic education in the country” (Jiráček, 1997, p. 50). The set of core university courses that western academics helped Jiráček’s university to establish were dedicated to news writing and editing, which means that such skills build the foundation of journalism education.

One estimate holds that overall about 3,000 journalism courses, trainings, programmes and workshops have been conducted in Africa, Asia and Latin America in the past 20 years alone (“Emerging journalism,” 2007). For a larger picture of the scale of global training activities conducted by the most respected western news and training organisations worldwide, hundreds of journalism educational and training programmes conducted in the Pacific countries and emerging democracies in Eastern and Central Europe after the collapse of communism should be added to these courses. At least 70 organisations from 25 donor countries outside the United States were funding media assistance projects spending USD750 million a year (Becker & Vlad, 2005). About 140 donors from the United States contributed to media training costing USD142 million in 2006 alone (*Funding for media development*, 2007).

Given such large involvement of western training organisations in professional training, could one expect that, for instance, trainers from Reuters, the Thomson Foundation, the BBC World Service Trust, the London-based Institute for War and Peace Reporting and the US-based Internews Network — the top global news and training organisations listed in the *Economist* article “Emerging journalism” (2007) — will teach local journalists how to write according to the standards of the journalists’ own countries? Of course not. A Danish journalism educator, Hans-Henric Holm, referred to various journalism training organisations specially created in Europe, including the European Journalism Training Association, or EJTA<sup>8</sup>, to support the penetration of western standards into the practices of reporting of the countries of the former Soviet bloc. Together with the European Commission, the EJTA supported journalism projects that introduced western practices to the easterners:

These projects involve getting a few students and a few teachers [from the east and west of Europe] together for a few days to make a joint production of magazines, radio programmes or TV stories (Holm, 1997, p. 49).

---

supporting the knowledge and education which may lead to a true independence of students and future journalists” (p. 50).

<sup>8</sup> EJTA groups more than 50 journalism centres, schools and universities from 23 countries across Europe.

Media training funded by USAID also promoted western values by “installing the norms of free press” (Kumar, 2004, p. 2):

Professional training helped insititutionalize the notions of press freedom in many ways. Often the training programs covered professional ethics, editorial independence, and the operations of the free press in Western democracies. More importantly, training exposed local journalists to norms of news reporting and coverage, multiple checking of sources, and the presentation of different viewpoints – essential for the working of free press... The cumulative effect was that large-scale training programs helped disseminate and institutionalize the norms and values intrinsic to a free press (ibid).

Referring to the activities of other reputable training organisations —the European Journalism Training Association and European Journalism Centre — Finnish journalism professor Finland Epp Lauk (2009) wrote that they “delivered a number of courses for journalists and journalism students on ‘best journalistic practices’, on teaching methods, on ‘Euroreporting’ etc. that carry certain common understanding of professional standards and values” (Lauk, 2009, p. 78). By professional standards and values Lauk apparently understood those in the use in the West, saying in the notes (in which she referred to Mancini (2000)) that the model “also called ‘Anglo-American’, ‘professional’ and ‘social responsibility model’ is widely recognized as a universal model for journalism practice and theory all around the world” (Lauk, 2009, p. 80). The same approach was taken by American training organisations, who have “worked to encourage the adoption of the ‘objective’ press model in the emerging democracies of South America and Eastern Europe. They implicitly assume that US-style journalism is a natural and inevitable world model” (Reese, 2001, p. 175-176). DeFleur & Dennis (2002) cast doubt on this idea, having written that because Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union’s media organisations are “besieged” by western media companies mostly from Germany, France, Great Britain and Scandinavia, the editorial content in many newspapers depends on where the new owners, consultants and observers come from:

When it came to editorial content, many of the papers followed the European model of interpretative news, which blends fact and opinion with analysis. Others were enthusiastic about American-style journalism, sometimes called “the journalism of fact”, which tries to distinguish news stories from the opinion and advocacy material on editorial pages. A battle over which style of journalism should prevail ensued as some papers in Poland and the Czech Republic, for example, preferred the US style of journalism while others sought more politically oriented material with a definite point of view or editorial slant (DeFleur & Dennis, 2002, p. 246).

Not only is the West offering a helping hand to nations in transition, but the developing countries themselves expect help from the western world. Among other measures to help developing countries to enter the “new world information order” (Masmoudi, 1979, p. 172), the West should:

- alert the media of the developed countries to the imbalances, deficiencies, and imperfections of the present communications system, by arranging for meetings

(conferences, seminars, or symposia) between those responsible for the different media in the developed and developing countries (ibid, p. 179)

- launch a wide-ranging campaign in the field of communications in the universities of both developing and developed countries, aimed at training or retraining professionals and inculcating the values of the new international economic order and the new world information order (ibid, p. 179)
- help to promote the development of the media in developing countries both at the national and regional levels (ibid, p. 182).

The best journalists in developing countries were often considered western-educated. For instance, Hachten (1985) wrote that European-owned newspapers “provided important models of what journalism could be” (p. 18), and that some of Africa’s best journalists were those who were trained in these newspapers and absorbed their professional values.

Comprehensive studies regarding the effect of changes in the education and training of journalists in the past two decades on the quality of news writing have not been found in available literature. Their effect on the journalism culture as a whole — at least judging by the example of educational change in the Czech Republic cited above was considered a failure by its leader (Jirák, 1997). Jirák writes that five years after the western journalism values-driven system of higher- and vocational education was established in the Czech Republic at the beginning of 1990s, the “stagnation of the journalistic education” became “almost touchable” (Jirák, 1997, p. 53). He believes that the changes were introduced before their time:

According to my observations, the development of skill-oriented courses somehow “hit the ceiling” because of the accepted professional standards. The journalistic education is deeply rooted in the standards of the profession itself. Because of the financial situation, most of the students work as part-time or full-time journalists during their studies and have no reason to think about improvement of the professional standards (ibid, p. 54).

The last thought apparently sounds like a contradiction, but it explains — at least, in part — the lack of quick change in the quality of journalism in the transitional countries of Eastern Europe. Jirák adds: “Journalistic standards cannot be easily transferred from one society to another without examining the specific situation” (ibid, p. 54). That was true for 1995.

Twelve years later, with the rapid development of the Internet and globalisation things apparently changed and the adoption of the major western journalism values and standards by transitional and developing countries is now being promoted by the highest international educational authority – UNESCO. Under UNESCO’s auspices a group of journalism educators from different cultures recently prepared the *Model curricula for journalism education for developing countries & emerging democracies* (Cobden, Adam, Holm, & Abu-Fadil, 2007). At its core, the curricula have a set of western values and standards, including in news writing. And despite the manual suggesting use of local textbooks and examples in

some parts of the curricula, the majority of recommended textbooks are western. For instance, for the Tier 1 “Basic news and features” course the document recommends using the Melvin Mencher textbook *News reporting and writing* or “any other text on the instructor’s reading list” (which includes six western textbooks) and supplement it with “local reference and examples whenever possible” (Cobden, et al., 2007, p. 62). The addition of “whenever possible” can mean only one outcome: local examples or references should be used in cases where they fit the suggested learning material, based on western approaches — as was done in a book by David Robie for journalists in the Pacific region (Robie, 2001). According to the document, these include critical thinking, place of journalism in the architecture of democracy, applying analytical and critical techniques to news coverage, scrutinising and evaluating information from sources, techniques to ensure accuracy, fair and balanced reporting, news judgment, ethics of reporting and writing, reporting and writing in depth, explanatory reporting for the general public, writing leads and learning news format, including the ‘inverted pyramid’.

But even before the publication of UNESCO’s curricula that gave official sanction to the use of western news writing values in transitional countries, western news values and practices were taught in these countries. A good example of a nearly direct translation of a western textbook with the addition of a few local examples is the book by David Randall. The Russian translation of his book *Universal Journalist — Universalny Zhurnalyst* (Randall, 1996) — was published in 1996 in Russia at the same time as its first English-language edition, and, being posted online, was widely available for those with knowledge of the language. Another example of the promotion of western standards and values of news reporting into the education and practices of journalism in developing countries can be seen in the book *The Pacific Journalist* edited by David Robie, an experienced journalism trainer from New Zealand.<sup>9</sup> One reviewer of the book, issued in 2001, stressed that the local culture and the expectations from the media are very much different to the western: “In some South Pacific societies there is a deep-rooted belief and respect for authority, coupled with a strongly disapproving attitude towards those who question, probe and publish that is contrary to the need for a journalist to be curious and independent” (Thomas, 2001). Politics in this region “is so often mixed up with issues like culture, the extended family system, and tribal and chiefly loyalties as well as customary obligations that it can become difficult for reporters to maintain impartiality and direction”, Thomas writes in his introductory summary of veteran Fijian journalist Jale Moala’s contribution to the book. However, the core difference in the

---

<sup>9</sup> Robie is director of the Pacific Media Centre, managing editor of the Pacific Journalism Review and associate professor in communication studies of the Auckland University of Technology in New Zealand.

section on news writing in *The Pacific Journalist* with any other textbook written for western journalism is in the use of examples. Teaching western values, standards and style of journalism writing is appropriately built on local examples, wrote another reviewer, John Herbert, professor of journalism at Staffordshire University, United Kingdom:

The practical chapters, the how to write and find news, sections, which have to be included in such a book, are pretty much those taught in any reputable journalism course anywhere, except of course that the examples are so local and this makes these how-to sections even more interesting for outsiders (Herbert, 2001).

Local journalists saw a more important value in the publication of this book — high journalistic standards help to resist the pressure of oppressive regimes by attaining “impregnable standards of self-defence” (Smiles, 2001, p. x). For journalists in authoritarian regimes to be able to find out “what is really going on” and tell it to people “accurately and without prejudice”, to be able to communicate their “insights to help their communities understand events, the things that are happening to them and around them”, journalists need to “achieve high standards of accuracy and balance”, which is their “defence against authoritarian control and the forces that want to silence the whistleblowers”(ibid).

A handbook for Filipino journalists, which has been recommended by UNESCO as a textbook for journalists in developing countries, presents the elements of news largely in line with the western elements of newsworthiness: immediacy, proximity, prominence, significance. One element — humour — is added to the usual list to “rid the readers of sleepy, boring and space-consuming news stories” (Ramirez, 1983, p. 98) The short description of the mechanics of news writing that follows is the same as in any other western journalism textbook. The only two exceptions are that when describing types of news intros, it does not give local examples, and it also does not describe the inverted pyramid standard<sup>10</sup>. The list of recommended literature for the news writing chapter contains only western textbooks. One peculiar ideological controversy is worth mentioning, though: while in the foreword to the book the then Philippines minister of foreign affairs, Carlos Romulo, wrote that the book is a “radical departure” from such liberal western values as ‘freedom’ and ‘objectivity’, both of which are “illusory and deceptive” (p. xvi), the author Ramirez clearly stated the targets of the press to play the function of the “public watchdog, fighting abuses of power and corruption, opposing irresponsible and irrational policies which go against the public interest” (Ramirez, 1983, p. 14). The notion of news asserted in the book is also far from its modern understanding of being “hard objective fact to be presented without bias” (ibid, p. 94). The newsgathering process, as described in the book, demands that journalists report truth and not hearsay, guesses or surmise, that they find trusted sources, verify facts,

---

<sup>10</sup> The latest issue of this book in 1989 was not available through interloan.

and get both sides of controversial issues. This inconsistency between the foreword and the content could probably be explained by the approval of the high authority — whatever it utters — being a necessary precondition of the book being published.

Another book, recommended by UNESCO, was written by 15 African journalism academics. The author of the chapter on journalism training in Africa asserts: “Today, more than ever before, the need is for truthfulness, fairness, accuracy and objectivity on the part of journalists” (Williams, 1987, p. 1). The next chapter of the book outlines the wealth of news and other types of intros, constructed using usual western mechanics and local examples. The chapter about news reporting lists as principles of good reporting the need to get the “5WH”, be fair, balanced and accurate, double check, source stories, use quotes, simple language, get flavour and human interest, never use officialese, never be shy or fearful of sources, and demand explanations if an interviewee has said something incomprehensible. Only a handful of publications from the extensive list of several dozens journalism books in the list of the recommended literature were non-western.

It should be noted, that many developing countries assumed the model of ‘development journalism’<sup>11</sup>, in which the media’s role can be seen as playing in a team with the government in the development of the nation:

More often than not, officialdom has taken the previously meritorious notion of development journalism (reporting impartially on a nation’s development) and has converted it into government say-so or commitment journalism, used in some cases to push ideologies and campaigns of governments or political parties (Lent, 1981, p. 62, insert in original).

Masterton (1995) agrees that in development journalism the media — at its best — uses the same guidelines as western journalism while having differences in content, and at its worst it becomes a propaganda tool of the state.

However, the situation is changing and some transitional countries are already in the process of leaving behind the values of development journalism. For example, a recent study in Singapore that aimed to find out if the local press had departed from the model of development journalism, found that the coverage of the 2006 elections practised such qualities as currency, novelty and conflict rather than promoting visions of the candidates’ policies which it would have if it had been still based on the development model (Cenite, Yee, Juan, Qin, & Lin, 2008). The authors conclude that “it may be that professional journalistic values are largely standard internationally, even in nations like Singapore that purportedly practise development journalism” (ibid, p. 290). But even earlier Massey & Chang (2002) pointed out similarities in reporting news stories in Asia — most countries of which are

---

<sup>11</sup> See Glossary.

proponents of development journalism — and the United States. They suggested that Asian news writing reflects global news values and agreed with Disayawattana (1996) that changes in journalism even go ahead of the transformation of the society's values: the “practice of journalism throughout Asia is more reflective of today's global marketplace than of any Asian-wide, national, or subnational value system” (Massey & Chang, 2002, p. 990).

In summary, news writing training and teaching of journalists in the countries of the Second and Third World has experienced some progress towards practising accuracy, fairness, balance and even style elements typical for western news writing. In some countries news journalism moves ahead of other important changes in the society. Under the influence of training by western journalists and deeper Internet penetration journalists from developing and transitional countries can be expected to ultimately be equipped with the values, standards and even styles of news writing practised in Europe and Anglo-American countries in order to compete with western news agencies for their audiences. However, the specific cultural peculiarities and political regimes should be taken into account in journalism training so that the teaching content fits with what local journalists can engage with, and newly accepted news values and elements should not pose risks to the lives and work of the reporters and people they write about and should not contradict what the societies are able to accept.

### *1.1.2. Expectations and disappointments. Media cannot change alone*

New democracies in Central and Eastern Europe saw training in western news style, values and standards as an important point of departure from the propaganda-style media that was the core journalism in the Soviet bloc (Jiráček, 1997). Polish television journalist Maciej Mazur in an interview on CNN's programme “International Correspondents”, broadcast on June 18, 2009, said that he learned his profession by watching CNN, which became available in Poland just before the fall of the Soviet rule (Sweeney, 2009). Mazur gave a picture of the journalism that was: “Communist television was a theater, which means it was a play and everyone knew that it was fake — the journalists and the audience as well” (ibid). Other media platforms were widely regarded as no better in terms of brainwashing people with state propaganda. Journalism experts also refer to other problems of post-Communist news writing: absence of fact-checking, mixing facts with own opinions, one-sided reporting, ignoring the need for credible evidence, reporting accounts of official events rather than newsworthy stories, bias in which it could be seen that journalists work not for their readers but for parties, or a particular individual, or business (Mahoney, 2006; Manro, 2005; Stolyarova, 2006; Thompson, Manro, & Palmer, 2004; Voltmer, 2000). Similar problems were spotted in news reporting in developing countries (M. Masterton, 2005).



To facilitate quick changes not only was training conducted by western trainers after the collapse of Communism in Eastern and Central Europe at the beginning of the '90s, but western reporters were invited to work for some Central and Eastern European publications. For instance, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the new owners of East German newspapers, Robert Maxwell and West German publisher Gruner and Jahr, invited westerners “to act as models and trainers for those who had to relearn their profession” (Masterton, 1992b, p. 118). The hopes for improvements in the state of journalism were high:

In the initial phases of transition, the expectation was that democratic and modern journalism could be relatively quickly generated with the help of Western know-how and investments. It was also assumed that Western professional ideology should and could be introduced to promote professional journalism (Lauk, 2009, p. 79).

Some journalism experts believed that the improvement would be achieved quickly. However, in some countries the pace and extent of change were discouraging and even threatened journalism's standing, wrote Masterton (1992b), referring to his research in the Czech Republic three years after the fall of Communism in Eastern and Central Europe: “The excesses of irresponsible freedom in most new publications occasioned by the passing of communism may hurt journalism's credibility in Czechoslovakia as seriously as did the years of political censorship” (ibid, p. 114). A few years later, in 1998, the director of the institute of journalism at Vilnius University, Marius Lukosiunas, wrote that “the first part of the transition — which included the disruption of the Soviet media system and the emergence of a new media structure which is capable of integrating western journalistic practices and is ready to be integrated into the structures of western media businesses — is over, and the next stage — which is to find its place and voice in united Europe — has just started (Lukosiunas, 1998). Yet still ten years later Toomas Ilves, President of Estonia — the country, which Lukosiunas referred to as the quickest of the three Baltic states in media development — criticized the Estonian press for being “angry”, “dark” and “yellow” in comparison with European quality newspapers like the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Le Monde* or the *Financial Times* (Lauk, 2009, p. 69). Polish and Hungarian media researchers concluded that the expected media changes did not occur and that several more decades was a more realistic time span for the countries in Central and Eastern Europe to complete the “complex, multidimensional and prolonged process” of the evolution of their media systems along with democratisation in these post-Communist countries (Jakubowicz & Sükösd, 2008, p. 27).

In Poland, some media owners seem to be more progressive than journalists even now. Almost 20 years after Communist rule faded away, the owners still consider it important to urge journalists to follow western journalism standards. “We encourage our journalists to always tell both sides of the story, put forward an objective view,” the founder of POLSAT TV station Szymon Solorz-Sak said on the “International Correspondents” programme on

CNN quoted above. “They should be unbiased in their reporting ... independent in their thinking” (Sweeney, 2009).

### *1.1.3. The reality: two parallel journalism paradigms*

No country has just one type of journalism in operation. Differences in professional conduct within countries are sometimes larger than between countries (S Reese, 2001). And it is not surprising, that countries in transition would have both types of news journalism operating at the same time: journalism that the local population is used to and journalism that has assumed or is gradually assuming western news style, values and standards. The second media category is largely made up of those outlets which belong to international news corporations (O. Tretyakov, 2007). Tretyakov, who successfully ran a Russian business newspaper, *Delovoi Peterburg*, since its launch by Swedish publisher Bonnier Business Press in 1993, believes that one of his most important inferences regarding the use of western values and styles, is that “one should not blindly follow the recommendations of the western owners... but efforts should be made to find common ground between the opposing views” (O. Tretyakov, 2007, p. 47). He added:

Western companies, which come to this country [for business] should understand: they cannot enter and immediately change everything, rebuild everything, and overnight create a democratic society. Those media will survive which, targeting the same ideals, are prepared to work as long as 10 to 15 years and are prepared to change the audience's demands (ibid).

Changes in any social paradigm take time. It took many decades of the evolutionary development of the market and the society for the partisan journalism in the United States to become more credible (Schudson, 1978) and still longer to be able to formulate a list of values that defines the core of western journalism (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001). Lauk (2009) believes that the conclusion made by Howard (2003) regarding societal changes in the post-Communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe equally describes why the transformation in journalism in these countries cannot be expected quickly: “[S]everal decades and generations are needed to change people’s habits and acculturation so that the societal change is decisive and enduring” (p. 9).

Measuring the extent of the penetration of western media approaches into news writing style in different countries or assessing the duration needed for the changes towards better journalism is beyond the scope of this research. However, several examples from such large countries as China, where reforms have been going since the early 1980s and Russia, which liberated itself from Communist Party rule in the early 1990s, can illustrate that two types of media can co-exist and compete in the same country.

In a study of the professionalism of journalists working in several national and international news outlets in China, the country's journalists viewed media that they understood as 'professional' as more worthy than the media belonging to party organs (Pan & Chan, 2003). This media included not only western outlets such as CNN, *The New York Times* and the BBC, but also a *Phoenix TV* station in Hong Kong and the popular Chinese newspaper *Southern Weekend*. The newspaper, although subject to Communist Party control like all other media in China, is practising more independent journalism and is economically successful:

[T]he results suggest that China's journalists appropriate the western model of journalism to fit the specific situations in China. Although the western and transborder media (e.g., Phoenix TV in Hong Kong) may serve as a source of inspiration (Chan, 1994; Pan & Lu, 2003) — and to this extent function as exemplars for China's journalists who are inclined toward the professional model — searching for the “right” Chinese translation is a persistent effort (Pan & Chan, 2003, p. 671).

The authors assert the existence of two “competing journalistic paradigms” in China, which are expressed in the attitude to them by local journalists (ibid). The complete shift of the paradigm may be expected only if there are fundamental changes of power in China, they write.

Russia apparently also has the same competing paradigms. State propaganda has established itself at television channels after a relatively short period of thaw under President Boris Yeltsin in the late 1990s, and many other major media outlets have also been under state pressure: “The law on mass media is not being fulfilled here in its core element: I assert that there is no freedom of speech on television, and not only on television,” popular TV anchor Vladimir Pozner told the BBC in an interview (Pozner, 2008). Russia was named “one of the world’s most dangerous countries for independent journalists” by *Reporters Without Borders* who listed it 153<sup>rd</sup> out of 175 rated countries in its latest worldwide index (“Russia,” 2010). However, some western media resources in Russian are available to the general public. They include two websites, which publish some translations of western quality publications, a Thomson-Reuters Russian-language website and also CNN, BBC and other western TV channels available by subscription. The research by Quandt (2008) which compared online news media in France, Britain, United States, Germany and Russia, showed that some Russian online news media have already assumed western news publication standards. Two Russian news sites were shown to contain 82.2 and 96.4 percent of “standard news items”, more than German and British, and about the same as the French and American sites (Quandt, 2008).

After Oleg Tretyakov's *Delovoi Peterburg*, cited above, which established itself in St Petersburg, the first massive introduction of a national Russian-language, but western-type

media occurred in Moscow in 1999, when the *Vedomosti* newspaper appeared. *Vedomosti* surprised Russians with its unusual reporting style. In just five years the newspaper, a joint venture founded with the participation of the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Financial Times* and Independent Media (the company that published the English-language *Moscow Times* and *St. Petersburg Times* (of Russia), became one of the most successful newspapers in Russia. At its fifth anniversary editor Tatyana Lysova admitted, that it had been a big risk to get involved in a western-style operation and that her colleagues in other newspapers had warned of its quick demise.

The prospective readers were also wary of the newspaper: they thought it was too special, too dry and too full of figures and facts. The *Vedomosti* style of writing was quite different to the Russian tradition — without the journalists' own opinions, assessments and emotions ... I remember I was shocked by the words of the then editor, that now I don't have the right to insert my own judgments and versions of the future events into news stories... These stories do not seem surprising now — the readers accepted our 'Western style' and many *Vedomosti* colleagues had to take it over in order not to lose their audience. It is shameful now to publish articles, written after interviewing one side (Lysova, 2004, p. 2).

However, the other, traditional, paradigm is also present, and remains taught in universities. For instance, Vitaly Tretyakov,<sup>12</sup> editor of a Moscow newspaper *Moskovskiy Novosti* (a Russian version of the *Moscow News*), and a journalism professor who was then lecturing in MGIMO (an institute preparing diplomats) and is now dean at MGU, the Moscow State University, teaches that news journalism demands little effort and can be diluted by the journalist's opinion. Tretyakov wrote in his textbook *How to become a famous journalist*:

I am fixing the main [idea] in the technology of the journalists' labour as an easy one: you find out something – tell about it, adding a couple or three subjective (more often than not) judgments. Nothing complicated. Nothing romantic. Nothing heroic (V. Tretyakov, 2004, p. 85, brackets in original).

This statement contradicts the western principles of newsworthiness, credibility, accuracy and fairness and it is not clear why readers should opt to read “something” simple in the middle of journalists' opinion.

#### 1.1.4. Context matters

Despite journalism in the developing world often being compared with post-Communist journalism, the context in which these journalisms developed historically and culturally is different. While further research is needed to create clear models of these journalisms similar to what Hallin and Mancini (2004) created for the countries of Western Europe, the differences in historical context are perhaps easier to understand. For example, it is apparent that the history of journalism in developing countries such as India or Pakistan cannot

---

<sup>12</sup> No relation of Oleg Tretyakov of *Delovoi Peterburg*.

compare with those of post-Communist countries because western journalism culture is not such a novelty to these former colonies of Great Britain as it is to the post-USSR countries. In the developing world, “many aspects of the imperial relationship remain and even prosper... the economic, military and technological”, and also “the more elusive but no less significant cultural ties” (Laitin, 1983, p. 317). Media as part of the culture in Africa, Latin America and Asia did not appear there “spontaneously at an appropriate moment in social evolution, but have been transplanted from metropolitan centers” (Golding, 1977, p. 291). Golding notes that these historical roots have “enormous implications for analysis of the structure and role of media in the Third World... [M]ost importantly, it means that accounts of the media in a single country which make no reference to an international context of dependence are empirically and theoretically barren” (ibid). In other words, “the cultural milieu of many developing countries were already ‘contaminated’, deeply and perhaps irreversibly altered by western cultural penetration, long before any modern media arrived (Sreberny-Mohammadi, 1996, p. 51). As opposed to these journalism cultures, journalism in Eastern and Central Europe had to develop almost from scratch after Moscow lost its control. Only after the collapse of the Soviet Union did media organisations understand that they had to compete for readers (M. Masterton, 1992b), but they had no previous experience of how to do it. Without knowing how to compete after years of indulging in protocol journalism,<sup>13</sup> and without clear directions, they kept losing readers (ibid). Masterton, who conducted research into the state of Eastern bloc countries’ media, wrote that the failure was largely due to violation of the basic principles of professional journalism:

[T]he unprofessional reporters on the new and fact-free newspapers didn’t seem to understand why they were failing. Their answer in the middle of 1991, nearly two years after the first flush of press freedom, was to indulge in even greater excesses. If possible, reporters were allowed to be even more flamboyant in their opinions and less diligent in their factual reporting (Masterton, 1992b, p. 117).

The ultimate target of most of the countries which have joined the European Union is, according to Lauk, acquiring the western model of journalism (Lauk, 2009). Therefore, despite the professionalism of media in the wider sense being understood by some researchers to be anchored in the “specific cultural context” (Reese, 2001) and having “intricate local variations” (Pan & Chan, 2003, p. 673), others are calling for national stereotypes in journalism education to be got rid of in their entirety — at least in Europe (Holm, 1997). Holm writes that breaking “the mould of a nationally biased understanding of media and news” is becoming a “central question” in the internationalisation of journalism education (ibid):

---

<sup>13</sup> See Glossary.

Within the last ten years, it has become increasingly apparent that a “new Europe” needed a new kind of European journalism and that this, in turn, required a new kind of transnational journalism education (ibid, p. 49).

#### *1.1.5. Will the ‘global news journalist’ emerge?*

The understanding of the term, ‘global journalist’, usually means a professional, who practises by internationally accepted values, styles and standards. While no such journalist exists yet because there is no professional Code of Conduct signed by every country, this approach differs greatly from the understanding of the ‘global journalist’ in the concept of Berglez (2008) of producing stories the content of which should be related to a global issue:

For example, when a journalist relates an environmental problem in Sweden to climate change, s/he generates global journalism, as climate change is a global process (Berglez, 2008, p. 847).

This research does not aim to compare all aspects of journalistic practices between western and transitional countries. It deals only with values and standards related to news writing. It is not argued that journalism values, or the elements of journalism<sup>14</sup> described in the seminal book *The elements of journalism* (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001), are equally applied in countries with different political and economic standing and cultures. But despite differences in journalisms per se in various countries, journalists have a similar understanding of what ‘a good news story’ looks like. Yet in 1974 the results of the research by Chaudhary (1974) into how journalists determine news values in the English-language newspapers in the United States and India showed that these newspapers “use the same values, and their newsmen use similar criteria in their news judgment” (p. 246). In 1991 after analysing nearly 3,000 questionnaires, filled in by journalists in 67 countries worldwide, Masterton listed nine universal news writing criteria which were valid to news writing internationally. They were: interest, timeliness, clarity, significance, proximity, conflict, human interest, novelty and prominence. The logic is apparent: readers could hardly be expected to enjoy reading boring, insignificant, unclear, plain and old stories, written about places and people they did not

---

<sup>14</sup> These values are:

1. Journalism's first obligation is to the truth.
2. Its first loyalty is to citizens.
3. Its essence is a discipline of verification.
4. Its practitioners must maintain an independence from those they cover.
5. It must serve as an independent monitor of power.
6. It must provide a forum for public criticism and compromise.
7. It must strive to make the significant interesting and relevant.
8. It must keep the news comprehensive and proportional.
9. Its practitioners must be allowed to exercise their personal conscience.

know. Another piece of research, in which hard news stories in such different journalism cultures as English, French, Japanese and Indonesian media were compared, discovered that some core western news values and standards such as neutrality and the 'inverted pyramid' structure of stories can be found in news reports in all these countries (Thomson, White, & Kitley, 2008). However, even these researchers point out the lack of research to reveal a big picture of how various journalistic values are practised in different countries (Berglez, 2008; Lauk, 2009; Thomson, et al., 2008). Challenging Reese (2008), who asserted that the scope of news journalism has become globalised, Thomson et al. (2008) wrote: "It remains difficult to determine how similar or different are the genres, styles and rhetorical workings of news reporting language as it operates around the world" (p. 227).

Lauk believes that ultimately journalism practices in the countries in transition will be replaced with "western professional ideology" and "professional journalism" in its western understanding (Lauk, 2009, p. 79). The driving force behind the creation of a so-called "global journalist" may become deeper internet penetration and globalisation (Braman & Sreberny-Mohammadi, 1996; Tomlinson, 1999), and also more powerful western business models (Boyd-Barrett, 2008). Boyd-Barrett pointed out that news agencies have already been adopting western-style news journalism:

Despite [the] differences between "developed" and "developing" worlds, in many ways we may say that news agencies everywhere are converging towards the western-style market-driven model of news, a model that is open to multiple revenue streams, some related to content, others to cognate service areas (ibid, p. 169).

It should certainly not be expected that assuming western approaches will make news journalism in all the countries a replica of the Anglo-American liberal model, which is the model to which other models of western journalism are believed ultimately to arrive at (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). However, the "format of news reports [sic] are [sic] becoming increasingly similar" (Holm, 1997, p. 47). So, perhaps, with the development of the Internet and access to international news, and increasing unification of educational standards in large parts of the world heralded by UNESCO, the emergence of a 'global news journalist' is not that far away?

### *Summary*

Judging by the volume of training in western journalism approaches in transitional countries, and by the acceptance of the main western news values by local journalists practising western-type journalism or its elements in some emerging democracies, globalisation and growing Internet penetration, it is very likely that the 'global news journalist' will emerge some time in the future, who would conform to the professional features described in UNESCO's *Model curricula for journalism education for developing countries & emerging democracies* (Cobden, et al., 2007). Perhaps no one can predict when most journalists in the

world will start practising the core modern news writing values and standards, but without specific training this progress may be achieved later rather than sooner.

## **1.2. Journalists need training**

Lack of media development in many countries, especially where press freedom is under attack has been a matter of concern by international journalism training organisations (Thompson, Manro, & Palmer, 2004). As reports by Reporters Without Borders suggest, media freedom in many countries, including post-Communists ones, is poor. For example, media in Uzbekistan, listed 160th of 175 surveyed countries, “is in the direct or indirect control of the ruling clans, starting with that of President Islam Karimov”. Uzbek journalists may be prosecuted for “interference in internal affairs” (“Uzbekistan,” 2010). In Russia, listed 153<sup>rd</sup>, media outlets and journalists who criticise the government or even the old Soviet regime, are targeted by libel suits (“Russia,” 2010). In Belarus, listed 151<sup>st</sup>, authorities have the right to suspend any media that publishes “inappropriate” news (“Belarus,” 2010). Media in Azerbaijan, listed 146<sup>th</sup>, was described as “tinged with authoritarianism and terror” and “lacking pluralism” (“Azerbaijan,” 2010). Media freedom in Kyrgyzstan, listed 125<sup>th</sup>, “has badly deteriorated since 2009” and been undermined by “growing political tension, polarisations and disorders”, and “nepotism and corruption” (“Kyrgyzstan,” 2010). Despite the obvious need to train journalists in these and other countries, critics point out that the theory of professional training is not well researched and therefore the practice lags behind. As Deuze (2006) notes: “[O]ne cannot help but notice that the education and training of journalists is a subject much debated — but only rarely researched” (p. 19). Regarding journalism training, Deuze wrote that such initiatives are listed rather than well described in most of the literature and concluded that the two “significant problems” that hinder such research are the “lack of vision and systematic investigation of (old and new) training models” (p. 30).

Mastering news writing is topical not only for journalists in Second and Third World countries. Many institutions that educate journalists in Britain do not provide them with skills necessary to do their jobs even after three years (Hann, 2001). Almost half of the United States’ journalists, surveyed for research commissioned by the Freedom Forum, said that they are sometimes incompetent to fully develop a story (Giles, 2003). According to *Washington Post* executive editor Leonard Downey and his co-author Robert Kaiser, the quality of news is on the decline: “Too much of what has been offered as news in recent years has been untrustworthy, irresponsible, misleading or incomplete” (Downey & Kaiser, 2003, p. 9). The view of decreasing news quality is likely to be linked to the increase of tabloid journalism as opposed to quality journalism, even though this assumption has not been investigated



(Costera Meijer, 2003).

News journalism in New Zealand does not always stand up to scrutiny. Lack of substance, big gaps, unsubstantiated details, inaccuracies in articles were mentioned in a survey by Sherson (2004), conducted in several New Zealand newsrooms. Judges of the 2006 Qantas media awards contest also argued that the level of news reporting in the country is mediocre and sliding downhill ("Judges' Comments," 2006). One of them equated a decline in the basics of news reporting in the country to "a crisis":

The standard of news reporting at all levels was disappointingly inconsistent. No single entry really grabbed me. I was glad the final decision on overall winners was left to someone overseas. None of this surprises me. Over my 40 years as a journalist I have seen a steady decline in journalists' grasp of the basics — grammar, punctuation, construction, media style, clarity of thought and writing, interviewing skills, ideas, energy. I believe what I and my fellow three judges found in the hundreds of news entries points to a crisis in newspaper journalism in this country.

Training is one way to upgrade and maintain news writing standards to the modern level.

Almost more than any other profession, journalism depends on intellectually versatile practitioners — people skilled in the immediate tasks of the craft, to be sure, but also fluent in the purposes and function of civil society. Such nimbleness of mind and technique can only be achieved — with quality journalism as its result — through a process of continuous learning (Carroll Stevens, former director of the Knight Foundation Fellowships, quoted in Giles, 2003).

This was said about American journalism and journalists, who live in a free democratic society and share its values, about journalists who are already skilled in the basics of their profession and whose editors are assumed to be top professionals. When western journalists participate in professional training, they upgrade their existing knowledge and skills by adding new features to cognitive schemas<sup>15</sup> that already exist in their brain. When they return to their media, they can practise their new skills right away and their editors are assumed to approve of it. However, when the same approach to training is applied to journalists in developing and transitional countries, the environment is different. Firstly, many of these journalists lived — or even continue to live — in autocracies with no civil societies and bear a strong habit of well ingrained routines and values that have little to do with either democratic values or the western theories and practices of journalism:

In some [developing] countries the press is expected to serve as a 'watchdog on government' ... It must carry, interpret, even propagandize the government's development plan to the people, because the future of the nation hinges on success in the plan (Schramm, 1966, p. vi).

Secondly, lacking the needed basic cognitive schemas is a minor part of the problem of quality. The greater problem is the need to unlearn many of their routines — and not just as

---

<sup>15</sup> According to cognitive theories, new knowledge can be used only when it passes from the working memory to the long-term memory with the creation of schemas.

individuals, who “rarely come to training programs with a clean slate — either cognitively, attitudinally or behaviorally” (Newstrom, 1983, p. 39) — but also the organisation as a whole as a precondition for learning new practices (Azmi, 2008; Michailova, 2000; Newman, 2000). Demands for such unlearning and relearning are often met with resistance (Villinger, 1996). Thirdly, training individual reporters rather than the whole media outlet, which is not such a problem for a western media outlet where the values and standards are already embedded in the organisation, is what is likely to be contributing to a lack of effectiveness of training in transitional and developing countries, as mentioned in the *Economist* (“Emerging journalism,” 2007). When journalists are back from a training workshop or short-term training, they are encountered by their editors and colleagues who have little idea of what has been learned and do not necessarily approve of the novelties.<sup>16</sup>

[A] third of the NSJ<sup>17</sup> trainees we interviewed expressed frustration over an inability to implement the skills they had learnt, and 42% of these attributed the stumbling block to newsroom conservatism. A clear implication here is that the NSJ needs to train newsroom managers (Berger, 2001, p. 6).

This inference agrees with the research in organisational studies, which suggest that businesses willing to change and meet challenges of the modern world should be trained as an organisation (Akgun, Byrne, Lynn, & Keskin, 2007; Benkard, 2000; Sinkula, 2002). News media businesses must be a subject to the same rule.

Given the magnitude of the problems with journalism training in developing and transitional countries, it could be suggested that investment in the scientific underpinning of journalism training in developing and transitional countries should be substantial. However, despite there being abundant learning materials on nearly every aspect of journalism in textbooks or on web resources, there is no scientifically substantiated theory of training of journalists in transitional or developing countries, which would justify the pedagogical tools used in such training or allow the trainees to monitor the dynamics of the outcomes of such training to provide them with control over their learning. Workshops and short-term training courses, which are the main educational settings offered by western journalism training organisations hardly take into account the differences in mentality, values, habits, and circumstances in which these journalists function. The result of such training that sometimes is just “speaking

---

<sup>16</sup> While training journalists in Belarus, this researcher received an email from one of the training participants, who complained that his editor disapproved of the principles of fair reporting, which was one of the core elements of the training programme. “He told me to work for a western publication,” the journalist, who worked for an opposition newspaper (funded by a western grant), said. He explained that the editor was pushing him hard to criticise the local administration without allowing the officials to respond.

<sup>17</sup> Maputo-based NGO Nordic-SADC Journalism Centre.

for six hours” is: “stone faces around the table”, “no reactions. No objections, no applause” (Lauk, 2009, p. 71). “Was my teaching that bad?” Lauk quoted the trainer as saying (ibid).

The most profound research into training journalists in the Third World — *It's Training That Did It* — was conducted by South African journalism professor Guy Berger (Berger, 2001). While focusing on ways to evaluate the impact of training courses, it pays little attention to the pedagogical and technological aspects of training. Berger's conclusion that the efforts of trainers “produce real results” (p. 3) contradicts the assertion made in the article in the *Economist* which said that after almost two decades of training in developing countries “the need for basic reporting skills is still central” (“Emerging journalism,” 2007). It is likely that training individual journalists in developing and transitional countries is not a realistic way to enforce lasting changes in the quality of journalism. It is also likely that participation in seminars and other short-term training courses is insufficient for these journalists to digest new concepts and nearly impossible to reinforce newly obtained skills so that they are automated and could be used in a variety of different topics, situations and contexts. The conclusion by Berger (2001), that “the impact of training seemed to need time to take full effect” is based on self-assessment of the participants of the training and their editors. However, it is not clear if the editors may be trusted; it is known that self-assessment is prone to overestimation of the achievements (Phillips & Stone, 2002; Phillips & Phillips, 2007), and it is also not clear what sort of training this conclusion is based on as the book does not give the outline or the target of the course.

The initial idea of training conducted by western journalism education organisations in the '90s was enforcing democratic changes in transitional societies. Good journalism is recognised to have a high impact on building and maintaining democracy (Adam & Clark, 2006; Dahlgren, 2007; Gunther & Mughan, 2000; Milton, 2000; O'Neil, 1998; Price, Rozumilowicz, & Verhulst, 2002). By helping people “make the choices that citizens face in a democracy — to vote, to petition the government, to exercise constitutional rights” — and by protecting the public “from abuses by governments and private institutions”, news journalism contributes to creating a civil society (Scanlan, 2000a, p. 6). However, because there are too many variables which affect societal changes, the direct impact of journalism training on democracy is yet to be measured (Berger, 2001). Nor have clear assessment standards been devised (Becker & Vlad, 2005).

### *Summary*

1. There is no theory to underpin training of journalists in news writing in developing countries.

2. The specifics of developing and transitional countries which should be taken into account while planning training should include the following:

- journalists come to training not with blank minds, but with deeply ingrained previous routines, practices, and values which are often obsolete
- training programmes should allow journalists to unlearn their previous skills as a prerequisite to learning new ones
- long-term training programmes are more likely to improve writing skills than short-term courses
- newsroom management in developing and transitional countries may not be aware of, or share new values and practices taught at training courses, so it is likely that a 'learning newsroom' type of training is more efficient
- a system of assessment of news writing skills, based on real outcomes and not self-assessment should be created to help evaluate the impact of training and to monitor the development of news writing skills during the period of the long-term training course.

In the next few sections the foundation will be laid to underpin the long-term online training of journalists as a modern way of professional education in the digital era. The following issues will be discussed:

- educational settings for training in news writing
- systems of assessing news writing
- tools for training in news writing

### **1.3. Online instructional setting<sup>18</sup> (e-training)**

The communications revolution is rapidly and significantly changing conventional teaching platforms by increasingly shifting instruction online. After e-learning started in the 1980s, its growth has been estimated at about 10 percent a year in high-income countries and a “sizeable increase” in middle-income countries, and “there is evidence of slow, steady uptake of online learning by institutions of all kinds around the world” (Geith & Vignare, 2008, p. 4, 18). Training professionals online is now practised not only in the western world, but also in developing countries such as China (Kawachi, 2008), Malaysia and Nigeria (Abubakar, Harande, & Abubakar, 2009), Kenya (Maritim, 2009) and Tanzania (Brigley, Hosein, & Myemba, 2006). Having started as a tool in educational settings following the expansion of the internet in the mid-1990s (Allen & Seaman, 2005; Busquets, Bernal, & Requena, 2009; Geith & Vignare, 2008; Sitzmann, Kraiger, Stewart, & Wisher, 2006; Suthers, Dwyer, Medina, & Vatrappu, 2007), e-learning soon became popular in workplace learning (Strother,

---

<sup>18</sup> For the purpose of this research, the variety of definitions of the instructional design in which the learner or a trainee is physically distanced from the instructor, are considered synonymous. They include: e-learning and e-training, computer-mediated conferencing or instruction, computer-assisted instruction, and asynchronous instruction.

2002). A survey conducted in the United States in 2009 of member organisations of about 500 trade and professional associations (80,000 organisations in total) revealed that almost 90 percent of these organisations either used e-training or planned to use it within the next 12 months ("Association e-learning: state of the sector," 2009).

One big reason for such conversion is the cost-effectiveness of e-training, mainly because of lower expenses both for the participants — on transportation, meals and other related costs (Roy & Raymond, 2006) — and for the instructor (Jung, 2005; Rosenberg, 2001; Strother, 2002; Whalen & Wright, 1999). Such training is equally pertinent to large corporations (Hall & LeCavalier, 2000) or small and medium enterprises (Chang & Guetl, 2007; Roy & Raymond, 2006). One of its biggest advantages is considered to be a better return on investment (Christensen, 2003; Jung, 2005) by reducing travel costs and employees not having to be absent from work for training (Roy & Raymond, 2008). Hall and LeCavalier (2000) wrote that economic savings by some US-based corporations which implemented e-learning instead of traditional methods of training delivery were substantial. Having provided five times more training at a third of the previous costs, IBM saved US\$200 million in 1999. Ernst & Young, which deployed a mix of 80 percent e-training and 20 percent traditional methods, saved 35 percent in costs. Rockwell Collins, by converting a fourth of its training to online platform, saved 40 percent in training expenses.

### *1.3.1. Why online: Advantages and drawbacks of online instructional setting*

A large body of research conducted in the past two decades shows that in online learning, the amount of content that can be learned, the level of achievement, and learner satisfaction do not differ significantly from when these are obtained in the classroom setting (Allen et al., 2004; Bernard, Abrami, Lou, Borokhovski, & al., 2004; Carter, 1996; Sitzmann, et al., 2006; Smeaton & Keogh, 1999; Wegner, Holloway, & Garton, 1999). After summarising 355 studies conducted in the 20th century — making it the most profound meta-research on this subject — Russell (2001) concluded that "no significant difference" exists between the effectiveness of classroom education and distance learning. The same has been found for the blended setting, which combines online and classroom delivery of content (Dziuban, Hartman, Juge, Moskal, & Sorg, 2005; Nowell, 2010; Ruiz, Mintzer, & Leipzig, 2006; Vignare, 2007).

In the early days of e-learning, much of the research was focused on technological aspects of this instructional setting as if the delivery platform itself helps to achieve a higher quality of learning outcomes (Chang & Guetl, 2007). However, educational psychologist Richard Clark, one of the harshest critics of the body of research that promotes online delivery modes, argues that the media attributes have nothing to do with learning. He argues that it is the instructional

methods and strategies of the delivery platform which make the difference (Clark, 1994). Chang & Guetl (2007, p. 1) argue: “Individualised learning in accordance with pedagogical aspects” is what the research should rather focus on rather than debate which type of technology is used to deliver instruction. In addition, there are other pedagogical considerations that are believed to boost the quality of e-learning. These include authentic learning tasks (meaning that the context of the workplace should be taken into account), and significant interaction and collaboration between the learner and the instructor (Carr, 2000; Ring & Mathieux, 2002; Saba, 1999). Online instructors should also consider learner characteristics (Phipps & Merisotis, 1999), including aptitude (Shaik, 2006), motivation (Hiltz, 1994; Phipps & Merisotis, 1999), attitudes and opinions (Davis, Bagozzi, & Warshaw, 1989). Beyond these, outcomes can be influenced by such issues as the quality of feedback (Sitzmann, Kraiger, Stewart, & Wisher, 2006), the ability of the learners to have control over content, sequence and pace of learning and the extent to which learner experiences are allowed to meet their personal learning objectives (Ruiz, Mintzer, & Leipzig, 2006), social relations (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991) and even daily caloric intake (Ramage, 2002). Anderson (2008) provided a set of requirements that may help to select the most appropriate instructional strategies:

Strategies should be selected to motivate learners, facilitate deep processing, build the whole person, cater to individual differences, promote meaningful learning, encourage interaction, provide relevant feedback, facilitate contextual learning, and provide support during the learning process (Anderson, 2008, p. 19).

As most online trainees are working professionals, training can be contextualised and the trainees can immediately test the new knowledge by practising it (Scanlan, 2007a; Sitzmann, et al., 2006) thus improving the transfer (Newell, Rosenbloom, & Laird, 1989; Ring & Mathieux, 2002), increasing the possibility of automating skills and achieving better performance by the end of training (Rogers, Maurer, Salas, & Fisk, 1997).

Further organisational and pedagogical comments on online learning and training are that its delivery is non-linear, allowing trainees to learn on their own pace of learning, process new information deeper, and integrate new knowledge more effectively (Salomon, 1988; Spiro & Jehng, 1990); can take place at any time, anywhere (Ha, 2000; Anderson, 2008); offers greater interaction, communication and participation than the “silent classrooms” of traditional education (Gold, 2001, p. 54); provides greater learning access than classroom to multiple instructional methods (S. Hiltz & Wellman, 1997); gives greater access to multiple instructional methods (S. Hiltz & Wellman, 1997); allows learners to do or redo only parts of the course that are pertinent to them (Roy & Raymond, 2006); ensures faster distribution of learning materials and consistent delivery of the course (Rosenberg, 2002); can provide immediate feedback (Kulik & Kulik, 1988; Roy & Raymond, 2006) and individualise training

by tailoring it to specific needs (Sitzmann, et al., 2006);). It also allows instructors to train from anywhere in the world, provided there is access to the internet (Ally, 2008) and to easily update learning materials (Roy & Raymond, 2006) unlike printed textbooks, and make them available to the learners immediately (Ally, 2008). Hyperlinking the content provides for deeper learning (Kozma, 1994).

E-learning also has drawbacks. Perhaps the biggest of them are rigid structures of e-learning platforms developed for both educational institutions and industries<sup>19</sup> that cannot take into account learners' aptitudes and are instructor-centred rather than learner-centred.

The instructional content and structure of these courses don't provide the learning experience suited to each student individually. It is difficult for many students to follow a long continuous course that doesn't allow him [sic] to find the exact chunk of material he [sic] wants in order to solve a specific problem ("Learning Objects – Does Size Matter? ," n.d.).

Inability to use learning to solve particular work problems is one setback of courses with fixed curricula and content. Another setback is inability of the content of the course to cater to individuals with varieties of previous convictions, knowledge and experiences (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 1999):

They come to formal education with a range of prior knowledge, skills, beliefs and concepts that significantly influence what they notice about the environment and how they organize and interpret it. This in turn, affects their abilities to remember, reason, solve problems and acquire new knowledge (ibid, p. 10).

Some researchers disagree saying that the magnitude of these effects “pale into insignificance compared with class/teacher effects” (Rowe, 2003, p. 1). However, while this may be indeed true for school children or students who come to universities straight from schools, the prior convictions, habits, and ways of work of professionals with experience are considered to have a strong effect on the process and outcomes of learning, because before professionals learn, they sometimes need to unlearn their previous practices and ways of thinking (Akgun, et al., 2007; Azmi, 2008; Magrath, 1997; Newstrom, 1983; Short, 1981). One way to resolve this problem is applying the recently developed technology of using learning objects. Such objects (see more in section 1.5) can be developed to cater for specific topics (Chrysostomou & Papadopoulos, 2005; R. Smith, 2004) and training outcomes (Gallenson, Heins, & Heins, 2002; Smith, 2004). Therefore, they should have the potential to be adjusted to different levels of competencies. This research purports to demonstrate the mechanism of the creation of online learning objects that are suited to the specific needs of each individual journalism trainee.

---

<sup>19</sup> Popular educational platforms are Blackboard and WebCT; for industries such platforms as CourseKeeper, Multibook, Atutor have been developed.

Among other drawbacks of online learning researchers note the difficulty of developing a rapport between cyber-students and cyber-teachers and the absence of tangible communication and interaction with other students (Ha, 2000); distress caused by communications breakdowns and technical difficulties (Hara, 2000); and lack of personal computers, even in California where an initiative to digitise textbooks was initiated by governor Arnold Schwarzenegger in 2009 (Kenney, 2009). The two latter reasons are indeed difficult to solve by any content of the training, but the issue of communication could be resolved to a large extent by providing the learners with the opportunities to talk with the instructors asynchronously by using forums, email, or other forms of communication via the delivery platform (which is usually a specially created website), or to talk live by using existing free instant messaging software such as ICQ or MSN, or even Skype when both ends can see each other and talk live.

In summary, despite its growing use, the success of online learning and training depends on teaching methods, instructional design, and a myriad of other factors. Therefore, the choice between classroom-based workplace training and online training should be made after consideration of all these issues, available budget and the option of funding an instructor's physical presence at the workplace, which might include thousands of dollars of expenses and serious distractions from work for group instruction. An alternative is having an online trainer organising the learning process with the trainees in their spare time. Looking into the future with serious time pressures, e-learning could be considered as having significant potential not only because it is more economic and can offer other organisational and pedagogical advantages, but also because the modern generation of potential learners and trainees, the so-called 'digital natives', have used computers from an early age and find it easier to learn from a screen than from the printed page. This research is mindful of the preferences of generations of journalists to come.

To date, despite numerous literature existing that proved no significant differences in the outcomes between face-to-face and online learning in higher education (Russell, 2001)<sup>20</sup>, no relevant studies have been found which compare the learning outcomes achieved through online professional training with those gained in a classroom despite creating control groups being advised in studies of professional training (Phillips & Stone, 2002; Phillips & Phillips, 2007). Studies of the advantages and disadvantages of online journalism training were also not found in available literature.

---

<sup>20</sup> Russel summarised 355 studies which compared the effectiveness of online and face-to-face education



### *1.3.2. Online courses in journalism and feedback during these courses*

Most of the journalism courses available online are offered by universities and colleges worldwide and include studies for Bachelor, Masters and PhD degrees. Communication in most of these courses is conducted by email or by post. None of the courses explicitly state the criteria for assessment.

Courses on news writing available online are designed either for beginners, or for professionals. A lot of training materials are also available on the Internet that could be used for self-regulated training. However, despite the practices being up and running, no scientific underpinning of why these courses are set up in a particular way was found. A brief look into some of these courses, however, was helpful to find out about their duration, content, feedback, and assessment if any was used.

#### **1.3.2.1. Courses for beginners**

Some online courses focus on the basics for novice reporters. For example, one out of ten of the London School of Journalism's online programme — 'News Journalism' — is taught over 12 to 18 months, with correspondence by email or by post. The course consists of 16 lessons, from the basics of journalism to putting the learner in the editor's chair of a busy evening newspaper. Only one of these lessons directly addresses news writing. Assessment tasks include rewriting poorly written copy and filing a 250-word news story. Diplomas are issued to anyone who successfully completes the course, but the assessment criteria are not available on the course website.

Britain's National Council for the Training of Journalists also offers several training courses, including the basics of news reporting ("Foundation course in news reporting," n.d.). The foundation course includes 16 modules and 68 tasks and can be studied for 6 months to 2 years. The modules include a description of the reporter's job, finding news, story construction, style book, writing for newspapers, interviewing and Teeline. Five hours of tutorial help is included, and more is available at an extra cost. The course does not involve any marking of assignments by the tutor, but the users can compare their writing with the assignments' recommended answers at the end of each module.

Most online courses on journalism teach freelancing. One such course has been developed by the Morris journalism academy at <http://www.morrisjournalismacademy.com>. According to its website ("Professional freelance journalism,"), the fully online academy is a subsidiary of Australian News and Feature Service Pty. Ltd. It teaches "how to become a successful journalist and writer" and the course, usually 12 to 24 weeks long, can be also conducted at

any individual pace under the supervision of a tutor. No assessment system that would allow monitoring of the progress of the learners is outlined in the course's prospectus.

One online programme for freelance writers has been developed in Russia ("Freelance journalism, "). It promises "freedom, money and fame" and consists of 10 lectures, assignments and the opportunity to communicate with the tutor by email or by post. No assessment or monitoring of the progress is conducted, but a certificate is given only after the trainees have their story published and earn either US\$250 for one article, or US\$350 for several.

The content of online journalism education courses is generally available only for those who take the courses. An in-depth study of the content of these courses is outside the scope of this research, because these institutions generally teach students without professional experience, while the main subjects of this research are working journalists who need to improve the quality of their news writing.

Because of the unavailability of the content of the courses online, the only conclusions that could be drawn from the available information is that the courses have no systems of assessment of their outcomes — at least they are not mentioned or represented on their web pages — and that they last from four months to two years. This is a substantial departure from the duration of training provided to journalists in developing and transitional countries most of which, in the experience of this researcher<sup>21</sup> shows, last from three days to two weeks despite many of these journalists also being considered novices in the type of news journalism that is taught at such training.

#### **1.3.2.2. Courses for professionals**

An online course specifically for professional journalists has been developed by the UK-based Content ETC ("Advanced news writing "). Progress is monitored by solving quizzes on the learned content, and for an hourly rate of £60, an expert trainer will review written work and provide detailed, personalised feedback which includes individual guidance, comments and practical suggestions. No regular assessment is conducted during the course.

The main entity providing professional training in the United States is the Florida-based NewsU university, founded by the Poynter Institute. NewsU is the largest journalism training organisation in America. It has developed over 150 free or low-cost online courses of which the *News Sense: The Building Blocks of News* and the *Lead Lab* — both developing news writing skills — are clear winners in popularity judging by how often they feature on the

---

<sup>21</sup> I conducted training for such western journalism training organisations as IREX, Internews, IWPR, and Eurasia foundation from 1998 to 2007.

Poynter.org's *News University* section. Some courses are only about one hour long with no personal involvement of the instructor. The only interactive course was provided by NewsU in 2007 when the Poynter Institute's director of programmes, Christopher Scanlan, conducted two free, four-week distance learning courses which included video, podcasts, interactive exercises and a course blog for the participants to communicate. On some occasions, journalists came together in a virtual classroom setting and conducted three 30-minute phone conversations with the tutor (Scanlan, 2007a). Communication was conducted by email and ICQ. According to Scanlan, the benefits of this course are that trainees spent four weeks studying at Poynter without leaving their desk; immediately put into practice the lessons they learned that month about good reporting and writing; had three individual coaching sessions with the tutor about their work; joined a community of self-learners; and did it all on their timetable.

However, this course took place only once. In October, 2009 another four-week online course costing US\$299 was conducted by Aly Colon, director of diversity programmes at NewsU. It was also instructor-centred and was dedicated to finding and telling untold stories ("Becoming a more effective reporter: Telling untold stories," 2009). Communication was conducted by email and, while most of the work was supposed to be performed asynchronously, the group had the opportunity to meet virtually to discuss ideas. The participants were also required to do some reading, watch podcasts, vodcasts and work on assignments. Again, no assessment or monitoring of the development of the participants' news writing skills was conducted.

The University of Texas at Austin is running a trilingual website using a grant of \$2 million from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation focusing on online training of journalists in Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, Peru, Colombia and the Caribbean (Rosental, 2002). The main activities, according to the website of the training programme include helping journalists to elevate journalism standards and defend press freedom, organise seminars and workshops in person and on the web to increase the skills of reporters, editors, and photojournalists. Training activities typically involve providing teaching materials, doing exercises and fulfilling practical assignments. No assessment or monitoring of the development of writing skills is used<sup>22</sup>.

Some e-training programmes for professionals are run by various media organisations. One example is offered by the BBC. At its site [www.bbctraining.com](http://www.bbctraining.com), the broadcasting corporation offers a few courses for self-paced learning, which are either text-based or

---

<sup>22</sup> Source: interview of this author with Prof. Alves Rosental in Singapore during the First World Journalism Education Congress in June, 2007.

include video podcasts, for example, a one-hour course explaining the BBC news style guide. Learning materials are created in the PDF format, but no interaction is set up and no assessment is involved.

The public resource YouTube has also included several short lectures on journalism values and techniques, which are conducted by well-known journalists and editors. For example, a 2-minute topic entitled “How to pitch a news story” is presented by editors from the Associated Press (Resnick & Donna, 2009).

The content of online courses in most cases does not differ from what is used in the classroom setting. One US college tutor and former journalist, Rich Cameron, in his notes about his online course wrote that the content was essentially the same as in a traditional classroom setting, the only difference being the digital delivery mode (Cameron, 1999).

Most online courses offer the trainees prefabricated assignments or tasks rather than deal with journalists individually. Such courses obviously have many advantages listed above that online learning can provide, including the opportunity to learn any time from anywhere, integrate the results of training in working practices. Such setup of online courses can apparently contribute to the knowledge of professionals who are already in business and are motivated to improve within the western school of news journalism. Some courses can give insights to lay people who are willing to enlarge general knowledge about journalism, for instance, courses on YouTube. However, they can hardly be helpful to those who need to relearn, as journalists in transitional and developing countries do, or learn from scratch, as novice journalists do, for instance, when they are requalifying from other professions. Such people need a guided apprenticeship and that should include rich individual feedback and the opportunity to watch their writing skills improved.

A conceptually different approach to online training in news writing has been implemented by David Ingram (Ingram & Henshall, 2008). Ingram, a university lecturer in Papua New Guinea, prepared a web-based manual aimed at journalists in “developing and less developed” countries as a simple, step-by-step “straightforward, no-nonsense guide”. The free virtual textbook on news writing contains three volumes, an index for material or concepts throughout the manual, and hyperlinks to other journalism materials. The three volumes of the textbook comprise relatively short units/modules outlining basic techniques, advanced reporting, and ethics and law. It is written in simple English so that it can be understood by people for whom English is a second language. However, the textbook does not offer much interactivity. It has only three exercises and, instead of helping journalists to process and digest information by doing more practice, Ingram recommends simply reading sections in the manual several times. The manual does not include assessment options.

In addition to the course conducted by the Poynter's Scanlan, one remarkable ongoing individualised course is offered by John Wicklein, a former reporter for the New York Times and a writing coach at the Washington Post. In his \$100 online course, Wicklein provides critique, editing and evaluating of seven stories, written by a trainee, and also offers relevant handouts. One hour of discussion over the phone at the trainee's expense is also available (Wicklein, 2007).

Several online courses for e-training journalists online were announced in 1997 by the European Journalism Centre in Maastricht (Schmidt, 1997). Schmidt, then director of programmes at the centre, wrote that this training would be in line with the journalists' professional environment, because "a fast growing number of journalists are already using the Internet every day for research purposes and are quite confident with its procedures" (p. 44)<sup>23</sup>.

In his justification of shifting professional training courses online as opposed to traditional seminars at the centre Schmidt wrote:

As the need for lifelong learning continues to grow and neither business nor groups of professionals can afford full-time study, more and more flexibility is required in the educational system. For these professional groups like journalists, a delivery system is needed that meets their individual requirements to study at their own convenience of time and place and at their own pace ... Today's journalist is busy. Besides the investment needed, it takes too much time to join a continuous programme of further training (ibid).

He added that the benefits of the online training at the centre would include blurring the distinction between academic and vocational training. He planned that students and faculty from different parts of Europe and the world, irrespective of time zones, would participate in the courses, bringing together different cultures. Such combining of global resources, he wrote, would become the most important result of online training, as "journalism itself becomes more and more international." Schmidt wrote that the online training would be conducted "maybe on the same quality level as the best international further training right now" (p. 43) and called the project "ambitious and realistic at the same time" (p. 45). However, these courses have not been implemented.<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>23</sup> The use of the Internet is becoming even more routine in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as the generation of 'digital natives' — those who are using digital technologies for many purposes from an early age — is taking over

<sup>24</sup> The EJC staff did not explain the reason these courses did not take place in reply to the email by this researcher

### 1.3.2.3. Online self-training materials

Another way to use online training resources is to read journalistic educational texts on various subjects. Among other sources, a number of such web-based resources for self-training are offered by media organisations based in the United States and Britain, including:

[asne.org](http://asne.org) (the website of the American Society of News Editors)

[www.notrain-nogain.org](http://www.notrain-nogain.org) (a resource for newsroom trainers)

[www.journalismtraining.org](http://www.journalismtraining.org) (managed by the Society of Professional Journalists)

[www.sabew.org/training](http://www.sabew.org/training) (Society of American Business Editors and Writers)

[www.bbc.co.uk/russian/indepth/college\\_of\\_journalism.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/russian/indepth/college_of_journalism.shtml) (BBC, Russian-language website)

[www.bbc.co.uk/journalism/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/journalism/) (BBC, English-language website).

These resources contain tip sheets or more extensive explanations of mechanics of reporting, reporting or various topics, but they contain no option for individualised training, where a tutor supports steady progress in news writing towards a planned outcome. Regular assessing of the needs is, however, crucial. While Kumar (2004) notes in regards to media training assisted by USAID in transitional countries that “[l]ittle effort was made to ascertain specific needs of the local journalists that could be addressed through training” (p. 2), I would argue that the specific individual needs of each trainee also need to be taken into account while conducting professional training programmes.

#### *Summary*

Despite a variety of approaches to journalism training, literature is lacking on web-based training courses offered to professional journalists and media organisations, specifically those which aim not just to broaden professional knowledge but also to raise news writing skills to a modern benchmark.

The organisation of most existing courses as self-learning practices apparently saves instructional resources. However, if no specific outcomes of the training are established it is not likely that trainees can achieve tangible changes in the level of practical skills of news writing as a result of the training.

Analysis of existing practices in e-learning in journalism leads to several conclusions:

- most online journalism programmes have been created either to teach journalism novices, or students in the academy, or to prepare freelance feature writers, or to train reporters in modern news values. Programmes dealing with professional training are usually short-term courses with a pre-set programme and no instructor facilitation
- some news writing instruction and other journalistic content is posted online for self-learning and could be used as external sources by other online courses as learning materials

- a handful of news writing online training programmes include interactive elements mostly quizzes or exercises
- none of the professional training programmes available online contain an assessment system to systematically evaluate the trainees' progress, or to measure achievement by comparing skill levels at the beginning and end of the course
- the specific needs of individual media and journalists are rarely taken into account when professional training programmes are conducted
- during online training, communication between students and their instructors takes place either by email or post, or does not take place at all
- there is no available literature on long-term, web-based, distance training courses offered to individual reporters in developing countries.

In summary, this list shows that, in most cases, instructional approaches to e-learning resemble those used in traditional training. This analysis agrees with Shute's (2003) conclusion on the need to change such practices in order to embrace the benefits that an online setting can provide:

Examples of e-learning on the Internet today are, too often, little more than lecture notes and some associated links posted in HTML format. However ... the true power of e-learning comes from the exploitation of the wide range of capabilities that technologies afford. One of the most obvious is to provide assessments and instructional content that adapt to learners' needs or desires (Shute, 2003, p. 108).

In the next two sections I will analyse several approaches to how an e-training course may be organised as a series of interventions tailored to specific needs, including personalised feedback, delivering assessment to trainees, ways of chunking, grouping and organising different types of learning materials to be used as tools in e-training, and ways to increase interactivity in online news writing courses.

## **1.4. Assessment and feedback**

As analysis in the previous section showed, despite a general understanding in pedagogy that feedback and assessment are considered key factors of the learning process, many journalistic courses that teach news writing worldwide lack these important elements of teaching. The following section will therefore focus on the theory and practice of assessment including in news journalism as an important feedback instrument in learning and training with the goal being to identify the most convenient assessment tool for e-training of journalists in news writing. The last section in this chapter will then detail this tool and discuss other opportunities it can provide, including personalised instruction without the instructors having to invest additional time into teaching or training.

### *1.4.1. Assessment in learning and training*

To be able to monitor the improvement during learning courses or programmes and correct

the educational process steering the learners towards the planned outcomes, instructors and learners need feedback (Cooper, 2000; Kieley, 2004; Ramaprasad, 1983). An important and popular part of feedback is assessment or the changes in learners' knowledge and competencies (Little, 2001; Moore & Kearsley, 1996; Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006; Russell, Elton, Swinglehurst, & Greenhalgh, 2006; Sadler, 1989; 2006). Assessment is usually produced as an expert judgment which is drawn on the basis of thorough observations of some performances (Loacker, Cromwell, & O'Brien, 1986). It is a systematic and continuous process with the emphasis on what learners "can *do*" (Anderson, Guadalupe, Bird, & Moore, 2005, p. 86, emphasis in original); and it is considered to have a "powerful influence" on learning (Heywood, 2000) p. 9). Assessment should be able to produce consistent numerical ratings for the assessed performance (Huot, 1996).

The focus of assessment on learning and individual development rather than merely on grading lies at the core of modern constructivist learning theories that advocate student-centred learning and see learning as an experience in which knowledge is constructed from the interactions of the individuals with their educational, social and cultural environment (Piaget, 1952; Piaget & Seagram, 1969; Vygotsky, 1962, 1978). Assessment is intensively addressed in the literature on education (Carless, Joughin, & Mok, 2006; Goodrich Andrade, 2000; Stobart, 2006) and training (Hale, 2002; Kirkpatrick, 1998; Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2006; Phillips & Stone, 2002). Regular assessment of learning outcomes is considered to be "most critical and important to educators and researchers (Astin, 1991, p. 38) because it allows not only measurement of the progress of the learner, but also the necessary corrections to the training content to be made and provides learners with help to overcome difficulties in the learning tasks (Keegan, 2003).

Assessments in both education and professional training are shown as multifaceted processes that include a range of activities depending on the level. In education the institutional, programme and individual levels of assessment are commonly used (Anderson et al., 2005). The institutional assessment is high-stake, incorporates aggregated data and is sometimes called 'evaluation' (Erwin, 1991; Upcraft, Schuh, Miller, Terenzini, & Whitt, 1996), while its opposite level — individual assessment — reflects personal learning achievements. In professional training the five-level Kirkpatrick-Phillips model of evaluation of the results of workplace training (Kirkpatrick, 1998; Phillips & Stone, 2002; Phillips & Phillips, 2007) is the most popular tool used by corporates to evaluate the results of training (Arter & McTighe, 2001) and also works well in the online professional training (Fyfe, 2009). This model has five levels:

- level I measures reaction and satisfaction of learners with the course by questionnaires and surveys immediately after the training



- level II measures learning and/or acquired skills, by using tests. Most common are objective tests (by comparing the trainees' answers with specific and precise answers to the test), norm-referenced tests (measure the position of the trainee in a certain group of individuals with respect to what has been trained), and criterion-referenced tests (measure knowledge or performance — usually simulation — against certain pre-written objectives of the course)
- level III measures the transfer of the training on the working behaviour (usually conducted after the training by observations on the job, assignments related to the training, questionnaires and performance monitoring),
- level IV measures business outcomes as a result of the training (output, quality and cost-effectiveness increase, time saving, customer satisfaction)
- level V measures the return on investment, or the cost-benefit ratio of the training.

A study, conducted by ASTD (the American Society for Training and Development) — the world's leading association of workplace learning — in 2009 showed that 92 percent of organisations polled use only level I of the model and the use of the assessment model is dramatically reduced with each level, with only 17.9 percent of organisations using level V (Fyfe, 2009). Many researchers believe that assessing the results of training, including online training, by the 'smile sheets' (reaction survey at level I) does not allow rigorous measurement of the impact of training on the knowledge and competencies of the trainees (Berger, 2001; Strother, 2002). “[T]here is almost always more value in knowledge gained, behaviors changed, and results achieved than in participants' reactions” (Patel, 2010). Patel, the ASTD researcher, cites three major reasons why higher levels of evaluation of training results are rarely used:

- the difficulty in isolating learning as a factor that has an impact on results (52 percent of the polled business executives)
- the lack of a useful evaluation system with the learning management system (41 percent)
- evaluation data are not standardised enough to compare well across functions (38 percent).

Practitioners cited these reasons despite the measurement tools (various tests, suggestions and checklists for their development, observations and questionnaires) and methods of collecting and analysing data having been described in the works by Kirkpatrick (1998, 2006), Swanson & Holton (1999), Hale (2002), Phillips & Stone (2002) and Phillips & Phillips (2007). The difficulties in the use of higher level assessments are apparently that the generic instruments suggested by these authors cannot be applied directly to other contexts of work. And creating and validating a meaningful assessment instrument is laborious and time-consuming (Andrade & Du, 2005; Cooper, 2000; Moskal & Leydens, 2000; Ridgway & McCusker, 2004; Woolf, 2004). The elements of this hierarchy of assessments are apparently more important in some contexts than others. Workplace training — the context in which the development of the new online training tools will be taking place in this research — is a

specific process in which the trainees are able to directly and immediately transfer new knowledge into competencies along with acquiring it. For that reason tests (level II knowledge) will be excluded from the research, and measuring the satisfaction with the training (level I) will be only a small part of the questionnaire that the trainees will fill out after the experiment. The research will focus on developing an assessment tool to measure levels of competencies of the trainees before, during and after the training to be able to monitor the changes in the quality of their writing and adjust instruction accordingly to achieve the planned training outcomes (Phillips & Stone, 2002).

Levels IV and V have not been assessed because financial outcomes of news training and return on investment after training were impossible to calculate for the reason mentioned by Patel (2010): the difficulty in isolating training as a factor that had an impact on the business of the company which at the same time had been improving its marketing strategies, advertisement and developing other business tools.

Among the assessment instruments used in the level II and level III assessment the most popular are observations, conducting criterion-referenced tests (Hale, 2002) and performance appraisal (Bernardin & Beatty, 1984; Kane & Lawler, 1979). Writing news stories is an observable performance, because its outcome — the news text — is a piece in which the coder is able to assess various elements in order to come to a conclusion about its quality.

In the next two sections several assessment systems that are used in news journalism are analysed in order to avoid their weaknesses and build on the strengths of existing online courses in the assessment area.

#### *1.4.2. Assessment of writing in journalism*

Despite the substantial wealth of the literature on assessment in education, few studies have been conducted into assessment of the quality of journalistic writing, including news writing, that could be used in academia or training.

Flesch's two formulae (Reading Ease and Human Interest) to assess the readability of articles (Flesch, 1948, 1949), despite their use for scholarly research, have been challenged as misleading and the scoring system unsatisfactory (Klare, 1974-1975). The formulae also cannot be applied for the comprehensive analysis of news quality because they do not take into account other important elements including accuracy of the story's facts and balanced use of sources (Bodle, 1996).

Most assessments of the quality of journalistic stories in their core have a set of criteria chosen by the authors. For example in the 5-year research into the quality of local television

news by Belt & Just (2008) the following criteria were assessed: significance, journalistic enterprise, balance, authoritativeness, and community relevance.

These criteria have been validated in a national survey of news directors in the United States who assessed the relative weight of each news quality variable<sup>25</sup>. Despite the impressive amount of work conducted in this research, the content of some variables looks rather ill-defined, and such core criteria of quality as fairness and accuracy are missing. For instance, news on the weather ('significance' criterion) may have enormous significance if a deadly storm is approaching, but it had to be awarded 0 points. Ideas are not always too important, but a story about ideas was awarded the highest score of 10 points. Undisputed event reporting for some reason belongs to two criteria — 'balance' and 'authoritativeness', but it does not seem to adequately represent either of these elements because undisputed event reporting has nothing to do with balance or authoritativeness. The coders may be puzzled while choosing the relevant descriptor — what if the 'authoritativeness' criterion of such events is being conducted by the highest credentialed source and thus needs to be assessed with the highest and the lowest score at the same time? Overlapping between the criteria and unclear formulation of the criteria is considered to be one of the biggest problems in creating assessment tools (Popham, 1974; Woolf, 2004).

One web-based assessment instrument based on criteria is the Australian Media Doctor resource ([www.mediadoctor.org.au](http://www.mediadoctor.org.au)), which has the motto of "improving the accuracy of medical news reporting". A special rating instrument has been developed, which first sorts out the type of the assessed material publication — "diagnostic test", "pharmaceutical", "surgical procedure" or "other". But then only very basic ratings — "satisfactory", "not satisfactory" or "not applicable" — are assigned to 10 rating criteria:

1. availability of treatment or test
2. costs of treatment or testing
3. disease mongering
4. evidence
5. harms of treatment or potential harms of testing
6. novelty of treatment or test

---

<sup>25</sup> Significance was coded from 0 (focus of news on weather or on sports) to 10 (focus on ideas, issues, or policy), focus on people was awarded 3 points and focus on public actors — 8 points. Balance was coded from 0 (undisputed event reporting) to 5 (mix of opinions, no one opinion more than 75 percent of the story). Authoritativeness could score 3 points if the story had an expert, or credentialed source giving an interview on camera, while undisputed event reporting and absence of sources scored 0 points. Community relevance scored 0 if the story had no relevance and 8 if the story contained emergency information that affected viewing area, 7 points if national information affected viewing area and 6 points if information affected major community institution, event or employer. Four points were awarded if the story affected Carib/Latin American/Spanish-language nation

7. quantification of benefits of treatment or of diagnostic accuracy and benefits
8. relying on press release
9. sourcing of information
10. treatment options.

The summary assessment may look, for example, “3 of 9” for an article published in *The Australian*, “Heart drug eases clots in legs, study finds” and rated on the Media Doctor website. This article received “satisfactory” ratings only for the criteria #3, #4 and #6, while #8 was marked as “not applicable” (“Rating: Heart drug eases clots in legs, study finds,” 2006). The article further received a two-star rank at its posting on the site. A short formative assessment — about 200 words critically outlining major deficiencies — is also provided. The assessment’s author, who is not named, especially focused on the journalist’s failure to provide an expert’s comment and also to mention a fact important to the public — the link between diseased blood vessels and smoking. The assessment tool, suggested by Media Doctor, apparently has some instructional value by giving guidance to journalists of where problems with their stories lie. However, to work as an assessment tool it lacks weighting of the assessment criteria — which is usually part of any assessment tool (Dornisch & McLoughlin, 2006; Popham, 1997; Tierney & Simon, 2004) — and clarity of how to do the evaluation. For example, it is unclear whether criterion 3, ‘relying on press release’, should be assessed as satisfactory if the story relies on a press release or does not rely on it. It is also logical to suggest that ‘satisfactory’ in this criterion cannot be compared in its weight in the final score with the ‘satisfactory’ in the ‘evidence’ criterion, because the latter is much more important. Clearly, as with Belt & Just (2008), finer-grained assessment tools are needed.

This problem of imprecise assessment is common for many news writing courses for which syllabuses are available online contain a simple holistic system of assessment of stories. For example, stories written for the news writing course at the USC Annenberg School of Journalism (Autumn of 2007) are assessed according to five levels of quality (Leonard, 2007):

- “A” stories are accurate, clear, comprehensive, well-written and require only minor editing (i.e., they are publishable)
- “B” stories require more than minor editing, and have a few style or spelling errors or one significant error of omission
- “C” stories are stories that need considerable editing or rewriting and/or have many spelling, style or omission errors
- “D” stories require excessive rewriting and have numerous errors, and should not have been submitted
- “F” stories have failed to meet the major criteria of the assignment, have numerous errors or both. A story that has a factual error that is material to the story merits an F. There will be no exception.

This holistic system of evaluation, though it apparently works for the sake of grading, does not provide students with precise information on the deficiencies in their writing that may have instructional value and help journalists to improve.

A news writing assessment tool that gives students better ideas of what is wrong with their news stories is presented in Table 1. It was implemented at the University of Southern Illinois (Speere, 2002). The highest score that a journalism student could obtain in this scheme was 100 points for an article, which was granted if a student made no mistakes. Most mistakes were rated from minus 12.5 points (for the failure to include necessary information, or using inappropriate information, or basic misinterpretation of information) to minus one point for errors in style. Some of the mistakes were assigned 'F' (which roughly means taking off over 40 points), including providing a wrong location or confusing 'its' and 'it's'. The list of 11 criteria included errors in names and other major factual errors; spelling and word use; attribution errors outside the intro; quotations; style errors and errors in content. A student could also be granted bonus points (plus 2 points), but only in one case — if a particularly strong active verb was used.

**Table 1. Assessment of the quality of news stories at the University of Southern Illinois**

<i>Name of the category</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Score</i>	<i>Clarification</i>
Name errors and other major fact errors	Wrong address, etc	F	
Spelling and word use	Misuse of its/it's, your/you're, their/there/they're, our/are	F	
	Use of very, really and great, other than in quotes or other spelling errors	-10	Each
	Capitalization errors	-2.5	Each
	Particularly strong active verbs	+2	Each
Leads	Backing into the lead, lead too long, failure to emphasize the news, beginning with attribution, clarity, etc	-7.5	Up to
Organization errors, usually in the first half of the story	An organization error is a serious deviation from inverted pyramid style or construction of the story that would lose the reader entirely	-7.5	Not more
Editorialising		-5	
Grammar	A major grammar error such as subject-verb, tense, run-on or sentence fragment	-5	Each
	A minor grammar error such as misplaced modifiers, pronoun case, pronoun-antecedent disagreement, or punctuation errors (other than	-2.5	Each

	those responsible for run-ons or fragments		
Attribution errors outside the lead	Beginning with attribution, loaded attribution, said he/she errors, etc	-2.5	Each
Clarity errors	Clarity can be an improper word use to a confusing phrase or sentence.	-2.5	Each
Quotations	Say-nothing quotes, lengthy quotes, redundant transitions and set up grafs, etc	-2.5	Each
Style errors	Associated Press style errors  Jargon, slang, cliches, wordiness and redundancies	-1  -1	Up to 10 points, then 0.5
Content	Failure to include necessary information, using inappropriate information, basic misinterpretation of information or other content problems not covered by any of the above categories	-12.5	Up to

The assessment format, shown in Table 1 is a rare example in journalism of a system which not only weights the descriptors, but assigns them various negative numerical ratings for bad quality of performance. However, it lacks fairness and consistency and seems either idiosyncratic or to be fulfilling some particular pedagogical task. For example, it is unclear why such mistakes as libel, falsification or plagiarism, which are not even listed, but, perhaps, implied as ‘other content problems’ would make the student lose 12.5 points while confusing ‘its’ and ‘it’s’ results in a loss of 40 points. In the similar fashion, this 40-point loss is incomparable with the loss of 7.5 points if something is wrong with the intro. The assessment inexplicably missed the ‘fairness’ criterion, which usually constitutes a major pillar in news writing (Brooks, Kennedy, Moen, & Ranly, 1988; Mencher, 1994). The formulation of the descriptors is not always clear and sometimes sounds too formulaic. For example, ‘beginning with attribution’ outside the intro is not necessarily bad and it is used in news stories widely, for example if the source is significant (Friend, Challenger, & McAdams, 2000; Itule & Anderson, 1991; Lorenz & Vivian, 1996); or several sources are being quoted in the text one after another (Aitchison, 1988; Brooks, et al., 1988; Friend, et al., 2000; Itule & Anderson, 1991; Tucker, 2008), or a quote which is attributed is too long (Harrower, 2007). It is also unclear why an error in tense (minus 5 points) is worse than an error such as a misplaced modifier (minus 2.5 points). In many cases the misplaced modifier can skew the meaning of the text, while the wrong use of tense hardly makes the text unintelligible. Such inconsistencies and controversies apparently do not develop much trust with the students and decrease both evaluation and instructional value of the assessment. As Popham (1974) wrote:

“A criterion-referenced test that doesn’t spell out its criterion satisfactorily might just as well be a cloud-reference test for all the good it will do” (p. 615). Confusions in the descriptions of performance may adversely affect marking if the coder gets tired. As Pamela Flash, associate director of the Center for Writing of the University of Minnesota, puts it in her article on the university website, “late at night, exhausted graders might get the distinct feeling that the standards they used in the beginning of the evening changed as they worked their way down the pile of drafts” (Flash, 2006).

One assessment tool suggested by Giles (1988) to assess the performance of journalists includes assessment of the quality of their writing. Some of its descriptors can be used in training journalists. However, the tool is internally inconsistent. Quite a few similar descriptions belong to several different criteria. For example, one descriptor is mentioned in four criteria: the descriptor saying that the reporter should provide ‘fair, balanced and accurate coverage’ (in the ‘gathering information’ criterion) overlaps with the similar descriptor ‘copy is factually accurate’ (in the ‘factually accurate information’ criterion), with the ‘reporter verifies names and addresses’ in the (‘verifying identities, addresses’ criterion) and with the ‘all sides of an issue are fairly represented in stories’ (‘legal awareness/sense of fairness’ criterion). The consequence of such overlapping means that rating of some of the criteria will be replicated rather than assessing a different performance (Bernardin & Beatty, 1984; Guion, 1998), and the final sum of the scores will be inadequate.

This section reviews only a few available samples of assessment instruments used in the practice of evaluating journalism texts. Many others use essentially the same principles of construction and analysing all of them would have unnecessarily increased the volume of this research. Analysis of these assessment tools allowed the following conclusions to be drawn:

- there is an apparent lack of tools available to assess the quality of news writing
- the existing assessment methods are lacking in fairness and consistency, some elements are overlapping, weightings, if any, and descriptors are not scientifically justified.

Lack of validated assessment systems in news journalism suggests the need for empirical research to underpin the development of such tools. In the next sections of this chapter different aspects of design and content of assessment tools will be analysed and guidelines for the development of the online rubric to assess the quality of news texts will be suggested.

#### *1.4.3. Scoring rubrics in assessment of learning outcomes*

One widely used evaluation tool is criterion-referenced assessment. It is based on a pre-determined absolute standard of quality (Glaser, 1963) or “well-defined domain of behaviors” (Popham, 1974, p. 615) rather than on standards established to compare learners between

each other, or a norm-referenced criteria (Glaser, 1963; Livingston, 1972; Neil, Wadley, & Phinn, 1999; Popham, 1978). The pre-established standards, or assessment criteria, are important because if evaluation is based on subjective judgments, even experts may reach rather different results (Heywood, 2000). Heywood referred to a research in which the difference between 13 social science assessors who judged the quality of the same assignments using their own values were so great, that “the only action which could be taken would be to reduce the weighting of the award for essays” (p. 280). One way to reduce the variety of possible subjective judgments is to use scoring rubrics.

#### **1.4.3.1. Types and content of scoring rubrics**

A scoring rubric is a format in which criterion-referenced assessments are often utilised (Dornisch & McLoughlin, 2006; Goodrich Andrade, 2000; Mertler, 2001; Moskal, 2000; Popham, 1997; Simonson, Smaldino, Allbright, et al., 2006). It is a teaching tool “containing criteria and performance scales that allow us to define and describe the most important components that comprise *complex* performances and products” (Arter & McTighe, 2001, p. 8, emphasis in the original). The correct choice of criteria and its measurement have been considered vital in industrial psychology for almost a century (Mèunsterberg, 1913; Scott, 1917, both quoted in Austin & Villanova 1992). Criteria are selected categories of competencies against which the learner’s performance is assessed (Dornisch & McLoughlin, 2006). Rubric developers then identify the desired level of performance in each criterion and prepare sets of descriptions along the continuum from the worst possible performance to the best (Arter & McTighe, 2001; Dornisch & McLoughlin, 2006; Moskal, 2000). The descriptors along the performance scale must fully and clearly describe the performances of different quality to enable the users to make judgments of the current level of performance and changes in the quality of performances from lower to higher levels since the previous assessment (Huba & Freed, 2000). Instructionally sound rubrics tell the judges and the learners “what elements of performance matter most and how the work to be judged will be distinguished in terms of relative quality” (Wiggins, 1998, p. 153). It is this clarity and rigour that is absent in the news writing marking schedules discussed above.

Developing assessments for online learning environment, including scoring rubrics, is usually based on the wealth of the assessment tools and strategies of their development approved for the use in the traditional classroom environment (Crawford, 2001; Dornisch & McLoughlin, 2006; Fisher, 2000; Kerka & Wonacott, 2000; Nelson, 1998). Online use of assessment is considered to have the potential to be even more effective than in the face-to-face setting (Kearsley, 2000), providing timely, efficient and detailed individual feedback to the learners (Dereshiwsky, 2001; Russell, Elton, Swinglehurst, & Greenhalgh, 2006), ensuring “improved



participation, guidance, and clarity” and “improved performance” (Fisher, 2000, p. 88). They also have the potential to enhance self-assessment opportunities (Woodbury, Roberts, & Shannon, 2000) and allow the learners to “take ownership of their learning” (Teerajarmorn, 2005) without time pressure (Zvacek, 1999). Some free online resources can help the users to generate rubrics (see Dornisch & McLoughlin (2006) for the web addresses).

Scoring rubrics describe specific characteristics of what is assessed at different levels of quality to clarify feedback and increase the understanding of the assessment (Mertler, 2001; Moskal, 2000, 2003; Nitko, 2004), reduce instructors’ subjectivity and ensure accountability (Crawford, 2001). The core role of a well-designed rubric is “improvement of performance through performer self-adjustment” (Wiggins, 1998, p. 153). Consistency in scoring, which depends on the clarity of defining the benchmark descriptors in different levels of quality in the rubrics, and the ability of some types of rubrics to improve instruction are considered the main benefits of their use in pedagogical practice (Arter & McTighe, 2001; Dornisch & McLoughlin, 2006; Wiggins, 1998). Rubrics are considered to be a powerful motivational tool and an instrument that enhances learning activities in the student-centred online educational setting (Swan, 2006). They are also able to provide “qualitative, meaningful, and stable appraisals than are traditional scoring methods” (Mariele Simon & Forgette-Giroux, 2001):

First, it presents a continuum of performance levels, defined in terms of selected criteria, towards to full attainment or development of the targeted skills. Second, it provides qualitative information regarding the observed performance in relation to a desired one. Third, its application, at regular intervals, tracks the student’s progress of his or her skill mastery. Finally, the choice of rather broad universal criteria extends the application to several contexts (ibid).

Scoring rubrics can be holistic and analytic. Holistic rubrics are based on the overall impression of the assessed task (Wiggins, 1998), if they describe the evaluated performance generally, or score only the most important trait in the performance (Moskal, 2000; Weigle, 2002). The descriptors within the holistic rubrics often contain messages which, despite being based on a shared professional understanding between the coders, may be too implicit for those who are rated. Such rubrics are better to assess simple performances or separate traits of a performance in contexts where speed is essential (Arter & McTighe, 2001). Wiggins (1998) gives an example of a holistic rubric that assesses oral presentation, which contains from seven to five descriptors at each of the five levels of assessment that ranges from ‘excellent’ to ‘poor’. Then, he points out the deficiencies of the rubric: “what should we do if a student makes great eye contact [one of seven descriptors in the ‘excellent’ level of quality] but fails to make a clear case for the importance of his or her subject [one of five descriptors in the ‘poor level’]?” (p. 165, insertions added). Reliability is also threatened, Wiggins adds, when “different judges unwittingly apply different criteria as they form an impressionistic whole

judgment using a vague holistic rubric” (p. 165). He concludes that the holistic approach may compromise validity and reliability of the assessment and the quality of feedback to the student in the name of efficiency.

In this research, the target of which is to develop online assessment and training tools and training to be used in journalism e-training, the use of the holistic rubrics for evaluation of the outcome of learning will not be addressed as their learning potential is thought to be limited (Dornisch & McLoughlin, 2006; Mertler, 2001) due to the lack of instructional guidance (Andrade & Du, 2005; Goodrich Andrade, 2000; Popham, 1997; Weaver, 2006; Woolf, 2004). Instead, the analytic rubric will be used.

Analytic rubrics break down the assessed performance into several pre-established constructs<sup>26</sup> (Arter & McTighe, 2001; Goodrich Andrade, 2000; Tierney & Simon, 2004; Wiggins, 1998) and have the potential to give students rich feedback on their strengths and weaknesses that scaffold the learning process (Moskal, 2000). They often consist of several criteria or several constructs each including a few criteria. The development of meaningful and effective rubrics is complex and time-consuming (Dornisch & McLoughlin, 2006; Mertler, 2001) and even “daunting” (Simonson, Smaldino, Albright, & Zvacek, 2009). Though the design of the rubric may vary, usually the criteria names (or constructs and criteria) form the left-hand columns while the horizontal continuum contains descriptors indicating increasing levels of performance towards competency mastery and, sometimes, beyond. The descriptors must depict elements of performance fully enough to make them useful for assessment, reflection, and progress towards the learning outcomes (Huba & Freed, 2000). Rubrics in which the nature of different quality gradations in complex performances are defined clearly and consistently to assist users to look at them “in the same manner”, have the potential to make “subjective assessment more objective” and thus increase the reliability of assessment (Arter & McTighe, 2001, p. 28).

No analytic rubrics have been found in available literature that could have instructional value for online news writing training in journalism.

#### **1.4.3.2. Descriptors in scoring rubrics**

The way the descriptors are formulated in scoring rubrics define their clarity and user-friendliness. But none of the rubric developers — while saying that rubrics help to reduce subjectivity — would assert that subjectivity and professional judgment have no part in a well-developed rubric. Simkins (1999) points out one possible exception: use of criteria that can be counted, or at least marked as ‘present’ or ‘not present’. However, two examples of the

---

<sup>26</sup> Synonyms: traits, domains.

“concrete, measurable criteria” that he referred to are not convincing: “Is it legible?” and “Do the links work?” He did not suggest how these questions could be articulated as measurable descriptors across several levels of quality in a rubric. As further analysis will show, descriptors in many analytical rubrics are not at all clear, and in some cases their language is too implicit to help users to draw instructional messages.

One problem is that the wording of descriptors does not always point out some specific performances. For example, the construct, shown in Figure 1 includes four criteria (‘purpose’, ‘design’, ‘data’, and ‘conclusions’), each having three levels of quality with from one to several descriptors.<sup>27</sup>

**Figure 1. The 'scientific approach' construct of a scoring rubric to assess poster presentation (Allen & Tanner, 2006)**

Level of achievement		
High (3)	Medium (2)	Low (1)
<p>● <b>Purpose:</b> The research question or problem is well-defined and connected to prior knowledge in the chosen area of study.</p> <p>● <b>Design:</b> The experimental design is appropriate to the problem; it is efficient, workable, and repeatable. If appropriate to the design, important variables are identified and contrasted to the standard conditions. The design allows for a sufficient number of comparisons of variables and of tests to provide meaningful data.</p> <p>● <b>Data:</b> The data are analyzed and expressed in an accurate way. Statistical analysis of data is present.</p> <p>● <b>Conclusions:</b> Inferences and conclusions are in all cases connected to, and are consistent with, the study findings.</p>	<p>● <b>Purpose:</b> The question or problem is defined adequately, but may lack a clear rationale or purpose that stems from prior knowledge.</p> <p>● <b>Design:</b> The design is appropriate to the question or problem, but may fail to identify an important variable or to account for all important aspects of standard conditions. Or, it may lack enough comparisons or tests to obtain data that have a clear meaning.</p> <p>● <b>Data:</b> Most data are analyzed thoroughly and presented accurately, but with minor flaws. There may be no evident use of statistical analysis.</p> <p>● <b>Conclusions:</b> Draws conclusions that are supported by the data, but may not directly connect the conclusions to the relevant evidence.</p>	<p>● <b>Purpose:</b> The study shows evidence of focus within a given topical area, but the search for new knowledge does not seem to be guided by an overlying question; there may be little or no stated connection to prior knowledge.</p> <p>● <b>Design:</b> There may be some evidence of an experimental design, but it may be inappropriate or not used well. The design may fail to account for an important variable or a major aspect of standard conditions. Another experimenter would have difficulty repeating the experiment.</p> <p>● <b>Data:</b> The analysis and presentation may be inaccurate or incomplete.</p> <p>● <b>Conclusions:</b> Reported inferences and conclusions are not supported by the data.</p>

Several descriptors in this part of the rubric contain formulae of the kind ‘well-defined’, ‘defined adequately’, ‘appropriate’, ‘sufficient’, ‘enough’, ‘minor’ or ‘inappropriate’. Such value judgments, while clear for the instructors, give no instructionally-valuable feedback to the learners. They will hardly be able to distinguish ‘well-defined’ from ‘defined adequately’. Such wording of descriptors apparently cannot serve for instruction despite the authors calling their rubric “explicit” (p. 203).

Even more vague and implicit wording is suggested as an example of consistent wording in another scoring rubric. Part of it presented in Figure 2 is supposed to “make the task, criteria, and attributes clearer for students, and they broaden the possibilities for the rubric’s use” (Tierney & Simon, 2004). The authors refer to Aiken (1996) and Rohrmann (2002) to justify

<sup>27</sup> The other three constructs are: scientific approach, presentation and originality. Overall the rubric contains 11 criteria.

the use of verbal qualifiers such as ‘few’, ‘some’, ‘most’, and ‘all’ to formulate performance descriptors in scoring rubrics.

**Figure 2. Rubric assessing the quality of a science journal <sup>a</sup> (Tierney & Simon, 2004).**

The required elements are present for each journal entries (e.g. Lab Summary, Materials, Procedure, Results, Conclusion).	Breadth	Few of the required elements are present in each journal entry.	Some of the required elements are present in each journal entry.	Most of the required elements are present in each journal entry.	All the required elements are present in each journal entry.
The entries are clearly written (e.g. style, grammar enhance understanding).	Clarity	Journal entries are <b>slightly</b> clear.	Journal entries are <b>moderately</b> clear.	Journal entries are <b>mainly</b> clear.	Journal entries are <b>extremely</b> clear.
The journal is organized (e.g. visible titles, ordered pages, etc.)	Organization	The journal is <b>slightly</b> organized.	The journal is <b>moderately</b> organized.	The journal is <b>mainly</b> organized.	The journal is <b>extremely</b> organized.

<sup>a</sup> The columns from left to right are: ‘performance criteria’, ‘attribute’ ‘novice’, ‘apprentice’, ‘master’, ‘expert’

The consistency, as the authors write, is in the use of such value judgments as ‘few-some-most-all’, ‘slightly-moderately-mainly-extremely’, and, in an example of a generic rubric, the chain ‘seldom-sometimes-usually-always’ is added.

The part of rubric in Figure 3 is apparently a corrected version of a holistic rubric, which, according to the authors, contained inconsistent descriptors. Compare the first, uncorrected version of the rubric in Figure 3 with the corrected one above in Figure 2.

**Figure 3. The initial part of an analytic rubric assessing the criterion 'organisation of a science journal' (Tierney & Simon, 2004)**

Performance Criteria	Attribute	Novice	Apprentice	Master	Expert
<b><u>Problem Criterion</u></b>					
Science Journal	(not stated)	Writing is messy and entries contain spelling errors. Pages are out of order or missing.	Entries are incomplete. There may be some spelling or grammar errors.	Entries contain most of the required elements and are clearly written.	Entries are creatively written. Procedures and results are clearly explained. Journal is well organized presented in a duotang.

The descriptors in the initial rubric are inconsistent, the authors write, because each type of descriptor is not always articulated in each level of quality. For example, the ‘completeness of entries’ is emphasised only in the ‘apprentice’ and ‘master’ levels, while the orderliness of pages — only in the ‘novice’ level. But is the descriptor ‘extremely organised’ clearer or more explicit than ‘well organised’? What is the difference? So, how useful is the corrected version? The coders “would probably be very unlikely to agree on scores” Arter and McTighe note (Arter & McTighe, 2001, p. 71), commenting on a similar example of the rubric that contained a 'frequently-occasionally-sometimes-never' type of scale, in which the rater agreement achieved only about 33 percent. The learners will obviously not be able to realise the difference between scoring judgments if implicit qualifiers are used (Arter & McTighe, 2001; Baume, Yorke, & Coffey, 2004; Goodrich Andrade, 2000).

If students never see the rubric, then you can use any language you want. If, however, the goal is instructional and students are expected to understand and apply the rubric, then wording is everything (Arter & McTighe, 2001, p. 71).

Weigle (2002) widens the applicability of the rubric, adding that the main point of rubrics is their “interpretability” so that all stakeholders in the assessment process can benefit from the results of scoring (p. 122). She points out that if the rubric is user-oriented, it must provide the learners with useful information to help them interpret the results of the assessment, as opposed to the constructor-oriented (guiding the construction of assessment), or assessor-oriented (guiding the rating process). So while the intention of Tierney & Simon, the developers of the ‘corrected’ version, was the instructional usefulness for learners, they apparently failed to achieve this outcome.

However, Tierney & Simon make a conceptual mistake by using the authors (Aiken and Rohrmann) to refer to in justification of choosing these particular verbal scales to articulate descriptors in scoring rubrics. Aiken and Rohrmann did not use these qualifiers. Rohrmann

(2002) tested the appropriateness of using them in questionnaires where respondents were supposed to choose one of the suggested options of the answer. Aiken used them for graphic rating scales in an example in which students were rated in accordance with the expected grades they can make in college courses. The rater was supposed to mark the line which connected several descriptions which were presented horizontally:

---

Below C in all courses	Below C in most courses	C in most courses	Above C in most courses	Above C in all courses
------------------------------	-------------------------------	-------------------------	-------------------------------	------------------------------

Thus, the format of graphic rating scale has little to do with scoring rubrics and the transfer of the qualifiers by Tierney & Simon was inappropriate.

Ironically, while many authors criticise vague articulation of descriptors, few immediate corrections were available. Instead, as shown above, examples are provided that are hardly better than those criticised. For example, Woolf (2004), who analysed the way rubrics are developed by several institutions, concluded that arriving at a certain grade is “mostly a matter of subjective judgment” (p. 486). Referring to various descriptors, he criticised the use of ‘*close engagement*’ with ‘*full demands of the question*’ for the lack of clarity of what this descriptor stands for, ‘*mature reflection*’ for the lack of clarity on what ‘maturity’ means, ‘*appropriate range of materials*’ for the absence of benchmarks against which the ‘appropriateness’ should be judged, and ‘*secure and pronounced knowledge*’ for the absence of the specific meaning (ibid, emphases in original). Woolf did not suggest any remedies for these descriptors. Simonson et al. (2006) also criticised inappropriate descriptors in rubrics in their book, *Teaching and Learning at a Distance*. However, the example of a rubric — on assessment of asynchronous discussion contributions — contains descriptors that learners might struggle with. For instance, “marginal” comprehension is described as ‘some understanding of concepts demonstrated; supporting evidence for statements shaky or missing’, while the description for ‘good’ comprehension is ‘demonstrates a basic understanding of key concepts; refers to evidence to support statements’ (ibid, p. 279). The difference between ‘some understanding’ and ‘basic understanding’ is obscure. The ‘shaky evidence’ in ‘marginal’ comprehension hardly differs from ‘refers to evidence’ in ‘good’ comprehension, because the quality of evidence that should be referred to is not defined. Popham (1974) called inadequate definitions of the descriptors “a fatal flaw”, which means the assessment, instead of being criterion-referenced, has become “cloud-referenced” (p. 615).

To increase the instructional potential of scoring rubrics, some authors suggest using a more detailed type of analytical rubric which they consider to have the highest teaching and learning potential. Three main labels have been suggested for such rubrics: instructional (Goodrich Andrade, 2000), skill-focused' (Popham, 1999) and 'analytic trait' or 'trait-analytic' (Arter & McTighe, 2001; Wiggins, 1998). They are recommended to be used for monitoring performance in complex assignments that are fulfilled as long-term projects (Goodrich Andrade, 2000; Tierney & Simon, 2004) and they are "the most useful rubrics for promoting learning in the classroom" (Tierney & Simon, 2004). The most commonly used label is the 'instructional' rubric:

Instructional rubrics provide students with more informative feedback about their strengths and areas in need of improvement than traditional forms of assessment do ... A well-written instructional rubric – one that describes the kinds of mistakes they tend to make, as well as the ways in which their work shines – gives them valuable information (Goodrich Andrade, 2000, p. 15).

Instructional rubrics apparently help to create a constructivist learner-centred process of learning in which the instructor is fulfilling a role of only a moderator (Anderson, 1998).

Learning from this perspective is understood as a self-regulated process of resolving inner cognitive conflicts that often become apparent through concrete experience, collaborative discourse, and reflection (Brooks & Brooks, 1993, p. vii).

Because they fulfill such an important role, instructional rubrics may be long, scoring is slower, and it takes longer to learn to use them (Arter & McTighe, 2001; Popham, 1997). However, their advantages outweigh their drawbacks. By "blurring the distinction between instruction and assessment" (Goodrich Andrade, 2000, p. 18), removing the mystery of what it takes to succeed and letting the learners internalise the content, the use of rubrics that detailed the performance supports the development of thinking and understanding, and the development of skills (Andrade & Du, 2005; Arter & McTighe, 2001; Goodrich Andrade, 2000). As an example, Goodrich Andrade suggests an instructional rubric for a persuasive essay with 8 criteria ('the claim made in the essay', 'the reasons given in support of the claim', 'the consideration of reasons against the claim', 'organisation', 'voice and tone', 'word choice', 'sentence fluency', and 'conventions'). The rubric, to be used in the 7th and 8th grades, is written in the first person. A small part of this rubric is represented in Figure 4.

**Figure 4. Example of part of an instructional rubric outlining criterion ‘organisation’ of a persuasive essay (Goodrich Andrade, 2000). The levels of quality (left to right) are: 4, 3, 2, 1**

My writing has a compelling opening, an informative middle, and a satisfying conclusion.	My writing has a beginning, a middle, and an end.	My organization is rough but workable. I may sometimes get off topic.	My writing is aimless and disorganized.
--	---	---	---

This rubric was used by the students as a checklist and for self-assessment when they worked on assignments, stimulating them to honestly and critically look at their own work (Goodrich Andrade, 2000). However, with the exception of the level 3 which can be awarded to bad writing because any text has a beginning, a middle and an end, the deficiencies in wording, discussed above, are applicable to this rubric, too. How can students adequately conclude if their own work is compelling or disorganised? Isn’t one person’s ‘satisfying’ conclusion or ‘compelling’ opening another person’s ‘aimless’ or ‘rough’ writing, especially if the first person is a student and the second one is an instructor? This example is also unlikely to fulfill the requirement that the descriptors be descriptive enough for learners to enable them “to engage with the criteria which distinguish acceptable from unacceptable performance” — as well as between the other levels of quality of performance, which is the most important to the instruction (Boud, 1995, p. 40).

Sadler (2005) wrote that the tacit knowledge hidden in vaguely written criteria effectively blocks the benefits that can be achieved if the criteria are explicit:

Reliance on standards that are based purely on tacit knowledge [expertise people carry around with them mostly in their heads] has a certain mystique about it that reduces transparency and often supports a dependency relationship between learner and teacher. Students are then forced to rely heavily — or even exclusively — on the judgments of others. Unless students are enabled, through the design of the learning environments, to develop appropriate evaluative expertise themselves, they cannot self-monitor and thereby control the quality of their own work while production is in progress (ibid, p. 192, insert added).

Developing descriptors is easy, writes Ebert-May (n.d.), if quantitative descriptors are given, for example ‘two examples of evidence that support the conclusion are provided’, or ‘no grammatical errors’. However, value judgments such as ‘vague’ or ‘concise’ “must be described clearly so that students see the differences between a statement that is *vague* and a statement that is *concise*” (ibid, emphasis in original). But the examples that she provides on the website of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, such value judgments as ‘provides clear explanation’, ‘uses acceptable style’, ‘demonstrates a good understanding’ are still used.



Many authors, as opposed to Tierney & Simon (2004), are not preoccupied with the consistency of descriptors across the quality levels. For instance, in the rubric developed by students and recommended by Simkins (1999) as exemplary (with two exceptions<sup>28</sup>), there are no equivalent descriptors in other levels of quality for such descriptors as ‘unprepared’ (‘in progress’ level), ‘quiet voice’ (‘so-so level’), ‘clear voice’ and ‘new information’ (‘good’ level), ‘uses expression’ and ‘motion’ (‘excellent level’):

**Figure 5. A rubric to assess the presentation of a research project**

Presentation	In Progress	So-So	Good	Excellent
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Boring</li> <li>• Sloppy</li> <li>• Unprepared</li> <li>• Not finished</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not practiced</li> <li>• Quiet voice</li> <li>• Mistakes in product</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear voice</li> <li>• New information</li> <li>• Neat product</li> <li>• Practiced</li> <li>• Accurate, looks real</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creative</li> <li>• Uses expression</li> <li>• Motion</li> <li>• Real-looking product</li> </ul>

The logic here is that there is little value in articulating the gradations along the continuum of every quality level for every descriptor. For example, ‘boring’ and ‘creative’ could be the extreme descriptors across the scale because even school students can distinguish what makes them want to sleep from what makes them say ‘wow!’, but the descriptors such as ‘a little boring’ or ‘insufficiently creative’ have little value to be used for either scoring or instruction. Or how should descriptors scoring the voice — ‘quiet’ in the ‘so-so’ level, and ‘clear’ in the ‘good level’ — be articulated in other levels? As ‘no voice at all’ at the lowest level and ‘deafening’ voice’ in the ‘excellent’ level? This apparently makes no sense. The same could be said about some descriptors in the rubric ‘corrected’ by Tierney & Simon (2004). For instance, how could the ‘orderliness of pages’ be assessed at other than the lowest level? For example, experts on marking, Meadows & Billington (2005), see no problem in different levels of quality representing qualitatively different ideas. They assert that such usage increases the inter-rater reliability of a scoring rubric.

Rubrics on online resources have the same deficiencies as discussed. For example, one generic rubric (Figure 6) that is recommended for use by teachers ("Creating and editing your rubric," n.d.)

<sup>28</sup> The exceptions in the quality of this rubric, as seen by Simkins, are: using essentially the same (last) descriptor in the ‘good’ and ‘excellent’ quality levels; and lack of description of what is meant by ‘boring’ and ‘creative’. The author does not give recommendations on better wording for these descriptors. There seem to be more deficiencies in the rubric. It is hard to understand the difference between ‘incompleteness’ and ‘contain most of the required elements’ — if some elements are missing, the journal is apparently incomplete. How does ‘contain spelling errors’ in the ‘novice’ level differ from ‘some spelling or grammar errors’ in the ‘apprentice’ level? Why are ‘mistakes in product’ assessed higher than the lowest level of quality?

("Creating and editing your rubric," n.d.), presenting descriptors for the ‘accuracy of facts’ criterion to assess writing, uses the all - almost all - most scale, which would work for grading, but does not have instructional value. If a rubric is recommended as generic, it must present exemplary — clear and explicit — descriptors.

**Figure 6. Part of the generic rubric to assess writing**

The screenshot shows a web-based rubric editor. On the left, there's a 'Category:' dropdown menu currently set to 'Accuracy of Facts'. Below it, a text box contains instructions: 'If you don't like the text in the box above, you can use the text box below to rename a category or type in a new category name.' and 'You may add or modify content in the rubric text boxes to the right:'. To the right of the category menu are five columns representing performance levels, numbered 4, 3, 2, and 1 from left to right. Each column has a text box with a descriptor and a 'Reset' button below it. The descriptors are:
 

- Level 4: 'All facts presented in the story are accurate.'
- Level 3: 'Almost all facts presented in the story are accurate.'
- Level 2: 'Most facts presented in the story are accurate (at least 70%).'
- Level 1: 'There are several factual errors in the story.'

In an example posted on the website of the teaching and learning centre of the University of Calgary ("Creating and using rubrics for student assignments,"), the instruction specifies: “Avoid unclear language in your rubric. Since a rubric is used to teach as well as to assess be sure that all the terms are clearly defined.”

**Figure 7. Part of an example of a rubric to assess discussion posting**

CRITERIA	LEVEL OF PERFORMANCE				
	0	1	2	3	4
Weekly Discussion Posting	Did not enter discussion	Poorly developed: does not add to the discussion	Developing ideas	Well developed	Well developed (at least one full paragraph) and introduces new ideas

However, as can be seen from the rubric in Figure 7, there is no clear difference between levels 2 and 3 that would carry an instructional message. In addition, ‘introducing new ideas’ in level 4 should probably have been formulated ‘introducing new relevant ideas’.

### 1.4.3.3. Ways to make assessment messages clearer to learners

The teaching and learning centre of the University of Calgary advises rubric developers to train students on models — some previously assessed work — suggesting that improving the understanding of implicit messages would help students understand descriptors in rubrics and thus help them in self-instruction and improve performance. However, some researchers believe that more could be done to improve the quality of feedback while not having to spend time training students on how to decipher feedback.

One way is to use a prefabricated bank of statements that would explain the concise language of assessments (Brown & Knight, 1994). The authors suggested that instructors “who have in their heads a series of comments that they use on numerous occasions” (p. 105) prepare these comments in full either on paper or on a transparency for the overhead projector, number

them, and when marking assignments, put the relevant number on the script and add the actual comment on paper or the transparency. When all marking is completed, the bank of statements will be either shown to students on a lecture, or provided to the students on paper so that they can choose relevant numbers of comments and read their feedback in depth. An “idiosyncratic”, personal comment may be added to the student work to personalise the feedback (ibid). Case (2007) goes two steps further. Firstly, he suggests combining assessment with the comments on an electronic template form and providing it to students. Secondly, he prepared several quality levels of numbered comments for each assessment criterion: one explained common student weaknesses, the second explained mistakes, the third recommended improvements and the fourth praised strengths. The numbers of the statements were suggested to students as the feedback’s augmentation during marking as well as in the research by Brown & Knight (1994). Both studies indicate that such alignment between the assignments and feedback saved a lot of time during marking and also allowed the bank of comments to be reused later, enabling feedback to be provided to students in a much shorter time.

None of these improvements in the understanding of feedback could be directly used for e-training, but the online instructional setting may be even more beneficial than providing pre-fabricated comments on paper or on an electronic template. In this setting, banks of pre-fabricated comments may be aligned with the assignment texts by hyperlinks, and thus the understanding will be only seconds away from the relevant sign in the text that tells the learner that some larger comment is just around the corner. Such augmentation of the instructional message in scoring rubrics may solve the problem of insufficiently specific wording, and may constitute the foundation of online training in journalistic news writing.

### *Summary*

Rubrics, especially analytic including instructional ones, increase the scrutiny of assessment and, by helping its users to look at the subject of assessment in the same manner, have the potential to increase the objectivity of assessment.

No assessment tools have been found in the available literature that would be able to serve not only as assessment, but also as an instructional tool to help evaluate, monitor, and improve the quality of news writing during the period of long-term online training.

Instructional rubrics are the best of three types of scoring rubrics analysed in this section in their potential to assess and instruct complex performances in a long-term educational project, especially such as training news writing skills, because it allows for a focus on a set of the

same elements of news writing and the monitoring of their changes over a long period of time.

The instructional rubric can contain several categories, like any analytical rubric, and several criteria in each category. While a rubric displayed on one or two pages is recommended for the schools' 7th and 8th grades, perhaps more extensive sets of criteria should be developed for such a complex professional performance as news writing in journalism.

To increase reliability and fairness of scoring, assessment criteria should be broken down into a set of descriptors for successive levels of performance.

The descriptors should be as explicit as possible and contain no tacit knowledge if the target of the rubric is to instruct and not merely assess.

Having descriptors in different levels of quality representing qualitatively different assessment matters does not necessarily decrease the consistency of rubrics, but may have a positive effect on their reliability.

None of the rubrics recommended by their authors as exemplary contain flawless descriptors despite all the authors calling for very precise and specific wording in them and even suggest using their rubrics as exemplary. Some examples have overlapping descriptors in different criteria. Many descriptors contain implicit value judgments, which the learners have no way of matching with their own performance because of lack of knowledge, and they cannot interpret these judgments into an instructional message.

Available literature on the practice of developing scoring rubrics recognises that it is very difficult to create descriptors which will completely exclude subjective judgment in the scoring process. This means that creating explicit descriptors is not always possible. Precise and clear descriptors can be formulated only if they use quantitative elements, for example 'two examples are provided'.

To make the descriptors that include value judgments understandable to learners, descriptors can be additionally explained by aligning them with some prefabricated statements. Online instructional setting with the option of hyperlinking learning materials between themselves may provide an even more expedient model of combining feedback with instruction.

In the next several subsections other elements of scoring rubrics will be discussed.

#### **1.4.3.4. Length of scoring rubrics**

The use of rubrics saves instructors "valuable time" (Fisher, 2000), but not if the rubric is overly long (Popham, 1997) in which case it is destined to "gather dust" on shelves rather than get used (ibid, p. 74). One or two pages of instructional rubric usually suffice for 7th and

8th graders (Goodrich Andrade, 2000). But how much is enough for assessing a complex performance while still remaining usable? “Believe it or not, I recently saw a rubric that was eleven pages long”, wrote Simkins (1999) in an article with tips on how to create ‘great rubrics’. “It asked the scorer to rate everything from the quality of the title page to the number of people who helped in producing the project” (p. 23). To reduce the volume of the rubric, Simkins suggested choosing only those criteria that “matter the most” (ibid). The author did not elaborate on the expedient length of a scoring rubric. Nor do other prominent rubric developers: “There is no single number of traits that will do this [assist teachers and students to visualize and discuss the important components of the observed performance and how they fit together]; it depends on the complexity of the skill or product” (Arter & McTighe, 2001, p. 21, insert added).

News writing is a complex professional performance. Development of the rubric to assess it should certainly take into account the achievements of pedagogy and could also incorporate relevant guidelines approved in psychometrics for creating performance appraisal systems. Such systems, that use a format similar to scoring rubrics, usually have more complicated and elaborated structures than those used for learning. Appraisal formats as a rule list several categories, or dimensions – the most important constructs of the professional behaviour and work quality. Categories consist of several criteria, and criteria are further broken down into descriptors (or attributes, or indicators) that outline the specific performances in different levels of quality (Bernardin & Beatty, 1984; Kane & Lawler, 1979). One popular assessment standard that is close to a scoring rubric is labelled ‘behavioural observation scales’, or BOS. The scales not only assess the quality of performance, but also “facilitate explicit performance feedback in that they encourage meaningful discussions between the supervisor and the employee of the latter’s strengths and weaknesses” (Latham & Wexley, 1981, p. 62).

The fact that such meticulous and in-depth assessments exist and are used to assess professional performance makes sense for this research because a one or two-page long scoring rubric with several criteria is unable to provide feedback on such a complex performance as news writing. Apparently several categories should be looked into, including the language, credibility, structure, factuality — these are all complex categories and would consist of several criteria each. However, the warnings about unreasonable length of the rubric should also be considered, because trainees apparently cannot digest too much feedback, and at the same time scoring against too many criteria may put too much pressure on the instructor. This research will attempt to create a user-friendly assessment tool.

#### 1.4.3.5. Scaling scoring rubrics

Scaling helps to fairly evaluate the performance. It involves at least two major tasks: firstly, defining the appropriate number of scales, and, secondly, weighting the rubric's elements.

##### **Quality levels in rubrics, setting standards and benchmarks**

Rubrics need scaling to sufficiently discriminate between the gradations of what is assessed (Wiggins, 1998). The recommendations in available literature suggest that any number of quality levels in scoring rubrics can be used provided they are justified for the assessment of the specific performance and the target of the assessment. Usually, instructional rubrics tend to have a longer continuum along which different gradations of quality are discriminated (Arter & McTighe, 2001). The authors equally recommend using a 3-point scale and an 11-point scale. Simkins (1999), however criticised both extremes, writing that three levels are insufficient because “you probably wouldn’t be able to make fine enough discriminations”, while to develop more than five levels is an intimidating job: “[I]f you try to force student work into five or more levels, you may find yourself splitting hairs” (p. 24).

In the practice of teaching, the majority of rubrics contain from 3 to 5 levels. These scales are descriptive or numerical. In the example of the rubric cited above by Goodrich Andrade (2000) the levels of the quality of performances are coded left to right from 4 to 1 points. She was not too elaborative in justifying her choice:

I describe four levels of quality but do not give them labels. In my experience, satisfactory labels are hard to come by, and it is obvious at a glance that a 4 is what everyone should try to achieve and 1 is something to avoid (ibid).

Wiggins (1998) agrees that high numbers are usually assigned to best performances, while scales usually use from 4 to 6 as the highest score, and 1 or even 0 as the lowest. In his examples, he positioned the quality levels from the lowest on the left to the highest on the right.

The options which are most typically used in scoring rubrics are:

- excellent, good, fair, unsatisfactory (Wiggins, 1998)
- in progress, basic, proficient, advanced (Wiggins, 1998)
- mastery, developing, unacceptable (Fisher, 2000)
- outstanding, good, fair, unacceptable (Simonson, et al., 2009)
- low, minimum, average, above average, high (Palloff & Pratt, 2009)<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>29</sup> Other options suggested in available literature include:

- exceptional, proficient, satisfactory, limited, poor (Wiggins, 1998)
- in progress, so-so, good, excellent (Simkins, 1999)

Some of the labels for the listed gradations do not exactly specify what quality level is meant despite the rule that they have “clear and meaningful differentiations between them” (Dornisch & McLoughlin, 2006, p. 3). For instance, ‘in progress’: any level lower than ‘excellent’ can be labelled ‘in progress’ for their intermediate function, and even the excellent level does not necessarily mean that the perfection has been achieved and there is no more potential for progress. ‘Developing’ also does not articulate a specific level of competency for the same reason.

Various rubric developers and researchers recommend mostly four or five quality levels:

- the lowest level of performance is described as ‘unsatisfactory’, ‘poor’, ‘unacceptable’, ‘unfinished’, ‘low’, ‘paltry’, ‘pitiful’, ‘nonperformance.’ Judging by the labels, at least two degrees of ‘badness’ are represented in two suggestions: ‘poor’ and ‘unsatisfactory’, and ‘pitiful’ and ‘unacceptable’. While the first of the labels in the couples sound like the performance is less than acceptable, the last labels effectively reject the quality of the assignment. Such labels as ‘beginning’, ‘limited’, ‘developing’, ‘emerging’ or ‘in progress’ do not have any specific connotation of ‘badness’ let alone the degree of ‘badness’ and, therefore, waste the opportunity to deliver an instructional message of the exact level of performance to the learner
- a minimal acceptable competency which is on the brink of failure but still acceptable: basic, fair, satisfactory, so-so, average, adequate. This level is sometimes labelled the ‘cut-off’ or ‘pass-fail’
- a level which marks a ‘good’, ‘above average’, ‘mastery’ or ‘proficient’ quality of work. The label ‘fine’ describes this level inadequately because ‘fine’ could also be a level of a ‘so-so’ level of quality
- an ‘excellent’, ‘outstanding’, ‘distinguished’, ‘extraordinary’ work, which is higher than the ‘good’ level of performance, a level to aspire to. In two of the suggestions (‘exemplary’ and ‘fabulous’, and ‘excellent’ and ‘fantastic’) it is hard to distinguish

- 
- emerging, developing, proficient, exemplary (Arter & McTighe, 2001)
  - beginning, developing, accomplished, exemplary (Mertler, 2001)
  - excellent, fantastic, average, poor, unsatisfactory (Roberts, 2005)
  - exemplary, fabulous, adequate, pitiful, unacceptable (Roberts, 2005)
  - extraordinary, fine, acceptable, paltry, unfinished (Roberts, 2005)
  - high, medium, low (Allen & Tanner, 2006)
  - nonperformance, basic, proficient, distinguished (Palloff & Pratt, 2009)
  - excellent, above average, average, minimal, unacceptable (Palloff & Pratt, 2009)
  - beginning, developing, accomplished, exemplary (Ebert-May, n.d.; Palloff & Pratt, 2009)
  - low performance, below average, at or above average, exemplary performance (Palloff & Pratt, 2009)
  - exemplary, quality, adequate, needs improvement, no answer (Ebert-May, n.d.)

which is a higher performance than the other, because ‘fabulous’ and ‘fantastic’ apparently do not belong to the ‘good’ level of performance).

The content of some quality levels is as controversial as their labels. To make the inferences for creating the scoring rubric to assess the quality of news texts, these controversies will be further analysed.

**'Standard' level.** Setting the performance standards, which in the listed levels of quality is marked by the 'good', 'exemplary' or 'proficient' descriptions, is a “cornerstone of standards-based education” (Arter & McTighe, 2001). The level of performance — which theorists call a ‘standard’ level — is “a specific and desirable level or degree of exemplary performance — a worthwhile target irrespective of whether most people can or cannot meet it at the moment” (Wiggins, p. 105). The fact that some levels do not contain this level is most probably explained by such a level either not being established or that such a level is not achievable because the rubric is, for instance, age-specific. Arter & McTighe (2001) recommend that if the target of the learning process is to “track progress continuously” from low to high levels the performance standards should be set up as absolute benchmarks which do not depend on the baseline competency levels of the learners (p. 76). This recommendation translates well for setting the performance standards for long-term news writing training for professional journalists: these standards should describe the quality that news audiences expect daily from media organisations. They are described in professional literature as proficient and what in practice editors often verbally label 'a good story!' To use these standards in long-term news writing training these standards should be developed for each criterion in the rubric by which the quality of a news story will be assessed. In the abovementioned examples this level was outlined by such descriptors as accuracy of facts, clarity, and presence of all or most required elements. Attributes of quality that may help to formulate the descriptors in the standard performance level to assess the quality of news writing may also include (Arter & McTighe, 2001):

- evidence of complete understanding
- use of appropriate methods and language
- presence of all necessary explanations
- correct use of all relevant information
- appropriate and easy to follow logic
- complete accuracy, using appropriate formats.

The benchmark describing the **minimal acceptable competency** is one of the most controversial issues in the benchmark-setting procedures. It is often labeled as a ‘cut-off’ point (Arter & McTighe, 2001; Goodrich Andrade, 2000). “The notion of this level of competency is “an educational concept”, writes Glass (1978). At the end of the 1970s Glass



stirred a professional debate in education research circles by trying to prove that setting minimal levels of competency was “arbitrary” and had no right to exist, because it supported “the decision when to stop teaching a child because he has attained the minimal level of skill needed” (p. 250).

I feel that in education there are virtually no absolute standards of value. “Goodness” and “badness” must be replaced by the essentially comparative concepts of ‘better’ and ‘worse’ (Glass, 1978, p. 259).

However, this approach is counterproductive, Block (1978) wrote in response to the Glass article. Block noted that the standard-setting techniques “are still flawed by certain logical anomalies” and do not always produce “consistent solutions, let alone perfect ones” (p. 292). Defending the right of the cut-off score to exist to signify the border level beyond which the performance has failed, he wrote that because the change Glass suggested has no developed system of measurement on intra-individual level, “the use of some standards can be preferable to the use of no standards at all in terms of student learning and instructional program development” (p. 295).

Almost thirty years after that heated dispute about setting the minimal acceptable competency benchmarks the issue is still controversial, especially when numerical cut-off scores are concerned:

Numerical cut-offs in the context of grading student work are not normally controlled by any set of procedures that would pass technical scrutiny, primarily because of the softness or unreliability of the underlying ‘measurement’ scale that arises from the subjectivity of assessment processes ... Numerical cut-offs are therefore intrinsically problematic (Sadler, 2005, p. 192).

Perhaps theoretical justification of the use of the cut-off score in regards to the quality of news writing is yet to be obtained, but this benchmark translates easily into the language of this research — an ‘acceptable’ level of quality for a news story which is published accompanied by grimaces on the editors’ faces and shrugging of shoulders. It is not good, but it is not inappropriate, either. It can still be published.

Analysis of the examples referred to above shows that the following attributes of quality could be instrumental to formulate descriptors in the ‘acceptable’ level of quality: almost all facts are accurate (Figure 6) some elements are missing (Figure 3) or have minor flaws (Figure 1) clarity is deficient, evidence is incomplete (Figure 1), some spelling or grammar mistakes may be present (Figure 3), logic may sometimes be violated (Figure 4). Attributes of quality that may help to formulate descriptors for assessment of the quality of news writing may include:

- evidence of nearly complete fulfilment, reasonable clarity which may lack details, general understanding, general appropriateness, insignificant flaws in some elements, the ability to generally stay on the topic (Arter & McTighe, 2001)

- presence of one error in style or grammar, lack of evidence to support the main topic (Ebert-May, n.d.).

**The lowest level** of quality needs to be discussed because an ‘unacceptable’ professional performance differs greatly from the ‘in progress’ level of achievement at an educational institution. The lowest professional performance can have grave consequences. For example in medicine the level of quality by which, for example, a medical nurse can cause grave harm by erroneously conducting some operation (Husch, 2005) is called ‘human error’. In aviation an incident in which a pilot was very close to disaster is called a ‘near miss’ (Sutcliffe, 2004).

Errors in journalism have also been addressed in the journalism literature, but not evaluated for use in assessment. Big errors cause consequences even bigger than in medicine or aviation. The biggest error in modern-day journalism was probably erroneous coverage of the pre-Iraq war events, including lack of fact-checking. This coverage is largely believed to have had a major impact on the American public expressing support for the war in Iraq that caused hundreds of thousands of deaths and a massive exodus of Iraqi people who lost their homes. The *New York Times* published an apology ("The Times and Iraq," 2004), but the damage was done. The suicide of the British biological warfare expert David Kelly is largely blamed on the BBC journalist, Andrew Gilligan, after an interview caused a political scandal. An independent public inquiry into the incident found that Kelly did not say some of what Gilligan attributed to him.

In 2003 the *New York Times* published another extensive apology along with extensive investigation into falsifications which the newspaper’s reporter Jayson Blair was engaged in. A public ombudsman position was created in the aftermath. The report of the committee set up to investigate the depth of Blair’s ‘journalistic crime’ said:

Blair did not travel much to the places nor witness the stories he reported during that period. The *Times*’s May 11 account and its June 11 follow-up report say Blair fabricated quotations and descriptions, even events. He plagiarized other reporters’ work. He apparently worked via cellphone and e-mail to lead his editors to believe he was on the scene when he was apparently either on another floor of the Times Building or at home in Brooklyn ("Seagal response," 2003, p. 49).

The depth of some professional misbehaviours that either cause death or firing of the staff member who caused it apparently cannot be put in the same league as less problematic professional mistakes and need to be allocated into at least two different levels of quality, perhaps the ‘unacceptable’, that is based on errors constituting a very serious offence, and ‘inappropriate’, that are mistakes which may be corrected. For instance, at the ‘unacceptable’ level in journalism are such offences as plagiarism, or factual errors that have a potential of causing grave consequences while at the ‘inappropriate’ level is a mistake in spelling a name that can be fixed by printing a correction.

Analysis of the examples referred to above, show that the following attributes of quality could be instrumental to formulate descriptors in the lowest levels of quality: evidence of messiness, sloppiness (Figure 3, Figure 4), absence of something (Figure 7), factual or spelling errors (Figure 1, Figure 3), boring (Figure 5), unfinished (Figure 5).

Attributes of quality that may help to formulate descriptors in the low performance levels in the rubric for assessing news writing quality may include:

- evidence of fragmental understanding, disorganised or incomplete performance, fulfilment of only a part of performance or fulfilling performance superficially, incoherent, muddled or incomplete effort to address the audience, explanations which are illogical or unrelated to the subject (Arter & McTighe, 2001)
- presence of irrelevant information, misconceptions, or ill logic, includes two or more errors (Ebert-May, n.d.).

**Level above the ‘standard’.** The level that goes beyond the ‘good’ and ‘proficient’ quality of behaviour, which in most of cases listed above is labelled ‘outstanding’ or ‘excellent’, is not a controversial issue in the literature. Analysis of descriptors in various examples shows that they describe a quality that adds something extra or unexpected to the ‘standard’ level. For instance, ‘introduces new ideas’ (Figure 7), or is ‘creative’ (Figure 5 and Figure 3), or demonstrates evidence of the use of higher levels of cognitive skills: ‘important variables are identified and contrasted to the standard conditions’ (Figure 1).

Attributes of quality that can help to formulate the descriptors in the highest performance level of the rubric to assess news writing quality may include:

- evidence of creativity, inclusion of elements of problem solving or multiple solutions, investigation, experimentation, analysing with support for arguments and interpreting for the specific audiences, making comparisons, generalisations, include examples and counterexamples (Arter & McTighe, 2001)
- applied knowledge from prior projects (Roberts, 2005)
- incorporates treatment of elements beyond the scope of the class and recommended references (Simon & Forgette-Giroux, 2000).

In summary, the labels of the quality levels should be formulated clearly and unambiguously, so that there is no overlap in the understanding of their meaning

Setting benchmarks and standards should take into account the goals of the learning: for professional training the levels that specify a solid level of professional quality should be established for each criterion along with the levels that constitute bad and exceptionally bad performance. Setting the highest achievable levels of quality is also important because journalists are likely to be motivated to improve when they see what the improved performance looks like.

While none of the educators specifically justified their choice of positioning the quality levels from left to right, for the purposes of grading, in which the lowest possible quality level is usually chosen, it is expedient to position them from the lowest level on the left to the highest level on the right — just as many people read<sup>30</sup>. In addition, such scoring saves time because having found the relevant descriptor in one of the lowest quality levels, the assessors do not need to do further reading of the rubric.

The following guidelines were created based on an analysis of pedagogical and psychological literature on assessments — and their logical extensions appropriate for the real situation of news writing — for setting up the benchmarks of performance in five levels of quality in the scoring rubric that was designed in this research to assess the quality of news texts. These benchmarks would help to articulate descriptions of observable patterns in news stories for all the criteria and their quality levels in the scoring rubric:

- ‘outstanding’ level: performance should shine above the ‘standard’ level of quality which would show journalists the way to improve and thus could potentially motivate them for higher achievements — show creativity or investigative skills; demonstrate extra courage; deal with extra complexity including reporting on contentious issues; introduce something extra or unexpected, show evidence of the use of higher order cognitive skills; include elements of problem solving or multiple solutions investigation; experimentation; interpreting for the specific audiences; making comparisons; generalisations; include examples and counter-examples
- ‘good’ level: performance should correspond to descriptions outlined in literature as proficient and which could be considered to be of standard quality in the published articles
- ‘acceptable’ level: performance of the lowest possible quality which could just make it into the publication; it can show evidence of nearly complete fulfilment, or, the other way around, unnecessary extra work; should have reasonable clarity but lack details; general understanding; general appropriateness; insignificant flaws in some elements
- ‘inappropriate’ level: constitutes the quality between the neighbouring levels: lower than the ‘acceptable’ level, but still not as bad as the ‘unacceptable’ level of news writing, including significantly incomplete or superficial performance; performance unrelated to subject; using weak, incoherent, illogical evidence
- ‘unacceptable’ level: performance that can cause grave consequences; offence punishable by law, or a matter of a reprimand, or otherwise unpublishable or exceptionally bad writing. Such writing may violate journalistic values and standards, result in encouraging asocial behaviour, or may represent writing which is unreadable, makes no sense, or serves no public interest.

These guidelines were used in Chapter 3 to help formulate the descriptors for the first version of the scoring rubric, which was labeled NTA1, along with the inferences from the available literature. These guidelines were especially helpful in setting up the descriptors for the ‘outstanding’, ‘inappropriate’, and ‘acceptable’ levels of quality, because available literature

---

<sup>30</sup> It could be positioned differently if used for people of other cultures who read from right to left

mostly describes good levels of news writing quality, and sometimes points out the unacceptable level.

### **Weighting scoring rubrics**

While many other studies point out the importance that the rubric elements have clear and meaningful differentiations between them in their relative weights (Dornisch & McLoughlin, 2006; Popham, 1997; Tierney & Simon, 2004), none give recommendations on how to achieve this goal. Surprisingly little attention is paid to creating a mechanism of weighting their elements despite the need to weight them being explicitly expressed. Miller & Linn (2000) wrote: “Relative weightings of content and skills within the blueprint [sets of specifications] are important for showing the relevance or criticality of specified areas; they are critical to defining the inferences that can be made from the assessment” (p. 369). As mentioned above, Sadler (2005) pointed at the “softness or unreliability” of measurement scales used in education.

To calculate the final grade by using rubrics with numerical rating scales — or verbal scales which imply numerical scales — the assessors add up the rates without consideration of the differences in the relative input of performances in different criteria. The result is skewed, as is illustrated by an example of a tool developed by Giles (1987) to assess news writing among other categories of journalists’ behaviour. Two descriptors in this tool are rated as ‘unacceptable’ and are awarded 1 point each in the final grade: ‘many spelling mistakes or typos in the stories’, and ‘repetitive factual errors’. But are they equally significant? The first ‘unacceptable’ performance is easy to correct by using a spellchecker. The second is hard to spot or correct by copy editing or proofreading a story and constitutes a grave offence in journalism where accuracy is a core quality, especially if errors are ‘repetitive’. In addition, do both of these ‘unacceptable’ performances deserve even 1 point? Are these performances five times worse than the top, ‘outstanding’, performance that is given 5 points? A little more logical seems a method of scaling suggested by Aiken (1996). He suggests assigning ratings from zero up so that the highest level of quality gets the rating which equates the numbers of quality levels minus one. In other words, if five quality levels are used, the ratings will go from 0 to 4. In this system the worst performance gets no scores.

It is surprising how unstructured the treatment of this issue is — that apparently affects the results of grading — by educators. For example, among 10 guidelines to develop rubrics suggested by Crawford (2001), only one refers to scaling. It says: “see if you and your colleagues can usually arrive at consensus about what scores to assign a piece of student work” (Crawford, 2001, p. 7). Mertler (2001) extends this understanding, writing about converting rubric scores to grades. He writes that teachers “must find a system of conversion

that works for them and fits comfortably into their individual system of reporting student performance.” But are consensus and convenience sufficient conditions to create a fair rubric? The admission by another educator who pledges to design ‘great rubrics’, also raises eyebrows: he recommends “keeping the ‘distance’ between levels equal” (Simkins, 1999, p. 24), so that, for instance, “work that scores ‘4’ in your rubric should be four times better than work that scores ‘1’”. But he immediately adds that “in the messy business of classroom assessment, you will not reach such perfection” (ibid). Explaining what others keep as tacit knowledge he writes that scales for rubrics are ordinal; they merely rank the performances by showing that one is better than another. So having in mind rating scales educationalists are effectively ranking a performance, while ranking is useful only to produce relative, but not absolute, grades. How valid is the resulting grade then? One author notes: “Across the top [of a rubric] are the performance levels, which roughly (and I do mean roughly!) equate to grades” (Palloff & Pratt, 2009, p. 69, insert added, brackets in original).

Some educators advise varying weightings depending on the pedagogical goals: “(t)he teacher can also weight each section, giving more value to one section over another” (Roberts, 2005, p. 13). But the author gives no suggestion on how to assign the appropriate values. In their book on the development of scoring rubrics for classroom assessment Arter & McTighe (2001) also suggested weighting “more heavily” the elements which are “especially important for a particular assignment” (p. 24). But again, the reasoning of how to determine the ‘heaviness’ and the range of the new scale is not given. In the absence of specific guidelines it is clear that both weighting and ‘heavy’ weighting are at the discretion of the teacher or a tutor and may have an only temporary pedagogical value. For example, a practical recommendation at the US-based Pearson Education website, designed to improve teaching, suggests giving some criteria in the assessment scheme a bigger share than others: “If, in a creative writing assignment, a teacher stresses character development, he or she might consider weighting the characters part of the rubric more heavily than the plot or setting” (“How to weight rubrics: part four in a five-part series,” 2000-2006). An example of such a weighted rubric with three criteria assigns the ‘character’ (‘who?’) criterion alone a weighting of 50 % while the ‘plot’ (‘what?’ and ‘why?’) criterion gets 25% and the ‘setting’ (‘when?’ and ‘where?’) criterion gets the rest.

Perhaps because authoritative recommendations to develop a scoring rubric suggest that such rubrics should be concise and no longer than one page (Popham, 1997) so that instructors will be more eager to use them for scoring, available educational literature does not offer a methodology to create a more extensive rubric with weighted categories, which may include a number of criteria each and be useful in professional training. Even performance appraisal tools that are used in practice are based on the same scales as those used in pedagogy: the

abovementioned BOS does not involve scaling, and numerical values which are assigned in different criteria in the same manner as in rubrics are summed up for the purpose of integral assessment. But the similarity of scoring rubrics and performance appraisal tools allows use of some suggestions in the literature on performance appraisal to create a method of weighting a comprehensive scoring rubric to assess news writing. One suggestion is to use correlation and factor analysis or other methods close to them to find relations between the elements and to eliminate criteria with weak links to their construct and clearly identify the content of constructs (or categories) (Comrie, 1988; DeVellis, 1991; Gerbing & Anderson, 1988).

In the next several sections learning objects as new online educational tools will be analysed and the scoring rubric will be shown as having the potential to host learning objects developed for training of news writing to journalists with different experiences and knowledge which is likely to personalise instruction without the instructors having to invest additional time into teaching or training.

## **1.5. From paper-based textbooks to learning objects**

A large group of American journalism educators analysed available textbooks about 40 years ago and concluded that the books were inadequate and isolated students from the profession of journalism (Windhauser & Click, 1972). High quality textbooks on journalism have been written since then, but some researchers still blame them for not changing in their basic outline in the past decades (Brennen, 2000; Mensing, 2010):

[I]n a fundamental way journalism texts have not changed since 1938, when Curtis MacDougall introduced the first modern journalism book, *A Teacher's Manual of Exercises, Suggestions, and Bibliographical Notations to Be Used in Connection with Interpretative Reporting* (Brennen, 2000, p. 110).

These textbooks are used as the educational basis for various journalism programmes in universities and courses, but in the era of globalisation and high Internet penetration a valid question to ask is: “[W]hy aren’t there more kinds of journalism programs experimenting with different approaches to teaching journalism” (journalism educator Loren Ghiglione quoted in Cohen, 2001, p. 14). Ghiglione then lists 10 various directions of changes in journalism education, but none is related to the opportunities provided by the fast developing World Wide Web except suggesting that in the globalised world “journalism schools should be as international as possible. Encourage students to work abroad” (ibid, p. 15).

At least one extensive textbook exists that signifies the beginning of what has the potential to introduce changes in journalism education — a free digital textbook on news writing *The News Manual* written for journalists in the Pacific region (Ingram & Henshall, 2008), which

can be also used by journalists in any developing country (Middleton, 2009). The first of its kind comprehensive online textbook in three volumes can be searched with the help of an extensive alphabetic index, has hyperlinks to the outside sources of knowledge, and can be easily updated. But while it is certainly a valuable resource of knowledge and a big contribution to teaching and learning news journalism, it is still written the same way as the other books — delivering information from the author to the learners. In other words, like most other textbooks it is teacher-centred — based on transmission of information to the learner — while modern constructivist pedagogy has already developed a new, fundamentally different conceptual model for the creation and distribution of online content that is centred around the needs of the learner: learning objects.

During the past few years, a new way of thinking, object-oriented thinking, has spawned the creation of small, reusable educational chunks of digital information that educators and trainers can archive and use in their course building and also share with others (Lehman, 2007, p. 57).

Learning objects vary in size, scope, content, design, and technical implementation and they are often compared to LEGO building blocks<sup>31</sup> (R. Smith, 2004) or even more appropriately with atoms that can join together only in some ways, but not in other ways. Learning objects are loosely defined as “any entity, digital or non-digital, which can be used, reused or referenced during technology supported learning” (“The learning object metadata standard,” 2002) and more specifically as:

[D]ocuments, pictures, simulations, movies, sounds, and so on. Structuring these in a meaningful way implies that the materials are related and are arranged in a logical order. But without a clear and measurable educational objective, the collection remains just a collection (Smith, 2004).

Some researchers limit the notion of learning objects only to digital entities (McGreal, 2004; Richards, McGreal, Hatala, & Friesen, 2002; Smith, 2004; Wiley, 2002). Many stress that learning objects must be tied to an educational objective or a learning outcome (Gallenson, et al., 2002; Smith, 2004). Learning objects “enable and facilitate the use of educational content online” (McGreal, 2004) because they allow the learners to explore the studied topic from a number of perspectives (Smith, 2004). They are believed to eventually “change the shape and form of learning, ushering in unprecedented efficiency of content design, development, and delivery” (Hodgins, 2002, p. 76). Learning objects can be packaged for the delivery “as though they were books or training manuals” (Downes, 2005). Sometimes being called ‘instructional objects’, ‘educational objects’, or ‘knowledge object’, they refer to anything that “can be independently drawn into a momentary assembly in order to create an

---

<sup>31</sup> LEGO are small units that can be fitted together in many ways to produce customised learning experiences.



instructional event” (Gibbons, Nelson, & Richards, 2000, p. 5). Many ready-to-use learning objects are available on the internet.<sup>32</sup>

The size of learning objects is one of two largest issues in the instructional design of online learning programs based on learning objects (Wiley, 2002). While they may include anything from multimedia and instructional content to software tools and even people and events referenced during technology supported learning ("The learning object metadata standard," 2002), several authors suggest a more stringent definition of the learning object as small, reusable chunks of instructional media (Friesen, 2004; Reigeluth & Nelson, 1997; South & Monson, 2000; Wiley, 2002). Such understanding fits very well not only with full-time students, but with the needs of busy multi-tasking professionals undergoing professional training: while they are unlikely to read extensive textbooks, they could be expected to be able to deal with small chunks of learning materials at a time.

Learning objects become even more useful if they are augmented with a lesson (McGreal, 2004). Barbaux, a proponent of m-learning (mobile learning), also suggests that meaningful learning “will not occur unless it is anchored in an authentic task where the learner can experiment, make mistakes and learn” (Barbaux, 2006, p. 137). Smith (2004) reiterates, that using interactive elements in learning objects gives the learners a chance to practise the knowledge they are studying. These suggestions open another big window into the opportunities for using learning objects that is important for this research: such objects can be linked to authentic documents, and supplied by interactive exercises and other tools which can boost cognition and reflective learning.

#### *1.5.1. Chunking learning objects*

Breaking down big texts into smaller and almost independent subtasks within the appropriate context is believed to facilitate human cognition (Anderson, Reder, & Simon, 1996). Short learning modules are thought to increase the speed and efficiency of development of instructional designs (Hodgins, 2002; Reigeluth & Nelson, 1997). A recently emerging concept in workplace learning is “nano-learning” (Masie, 2005, p. 1). Such learning experience is provided by content that is broken up into small chunks of information which could engage the learner for only 5 to 30 minutes and address a specific point (Cooper, 2006). The length of nano-learning materials is dictated only by the internal constraints of a single topic (Dash, 2002). The concepts of nano-learning as an e-learner’s interaction of only a few minutes with a learning matter broken down to very small bits of content is also labelled “microchunk learning” (Lindner, 2006, p. 42) or “microlearning” (ibid, 46). Short learning

---

<sup>32</sup> For example, at [www.merlot.org](http://www.merlot.org).

bits have another advantage beyond needing little time to digest: they can be “aggregated and reconstructed in hyperefficient ways” (Hague, 2005, p. 33).

The need to give the learners exactly what they need in small bits is especially significant in the era of “‘digital natives’, the first generation to grow up with digital media in multiple forms; they are extremely adept at multitasking with multiple devices” (Barbaux, 2006, p. 133). Barbaux writes that “bite-sized” learning “chunks” are suitable for three reasons — they can fit the small screen of the mobile phone, its processing capability and students’ short learning times and cycles (ibid, p. 138).

As mentioned above, chunking of learning objects is one of the two largest issues in instructional design (Wiley, 2002). The second largest issue is the organisation of the learning objects in repositories that can house hundreds and thousands of small chunks, so that they can be easily located and retrieved for the use in learning.

### *1.5.2. Classification and storing learning objects for reuse*

When not just dozens, but hundreds or thousands of small chunks of learning materials need to be used, a system of easy location and retrieval is vital. However, not many suggestions are given in the literature that could be instrumental for the purpose of reusing them for online training. For example, Lindner (2006), suggests that the microcontent can be “loosely joined” and “permanently rearranging to form volatile (micro)-knowledge clouds, and making necessary new forms of (micro)-learning” (Lindner, 2006, p. 41), but gives no instruction on how to detect the needed learning object in the relevant “cloud” for use in the learning process. Some authors suggest an easy solution: compact learning objects could be email-attachable or easily downloaded as a video podcast (Cooper, 2006). Such suggestions may work with small numbers of objects. When, as Brown & Knight (1994) write, the list of comments prepared for a particular assignment includes up to 30 units, it is not hard for the instructor to quickly locate the needed comment and insert its number in the marked document. However, to train learners in such a complex activity as news writing, which contains thousands of big and small elements, a special system of coding needs to be set up to help both the instructor not to get lost in the ocean of pretyped materials and to facilitate their retrieval for use by the learner.

Properly classifying and storing learning objects is important to make them reusable and therefore they should be “constructed appropriately, warehoused wisely, and catalogued accurately” (Richards, McGreal, Hatala, & Friesen, 2002, p. 69). The authors point out that the key function of repositories to warehouse learning objects is to identify their location and provide an indexing system that would facilitate the search for and discovery of the objects.

They believe that proper storage of learning objects will finally result in creating an international universal repository model that will contribute greatly to future models of learning:

Learning object repositories are the catalogues of the e-learning era. They will be the fundamental first step in knowledge discovery and object exchange. They will provide the foundation for future learning and commerce in the knowledge market. They will fuel e-learning as the stock exchanges fueled the industrial era. This is why they are of priority interest (ibid, pp. 77-78).

One step to this target is creating a coding system in the form of the Learning Objects Metadata Standard, prepared by IEEE.<sup>33</sup> This classification is composed as a hierarchy of elements with nine parent categories, each containing sub-elements. The sub-elements are either independent elements that hold data, or themselves contain further sub-elements. All the elements have codes. The parent category is coded from 1 to 9, the first level of sub-elements — from 1.1 to 9.9 and each of the further breakdown of the elements is coded by using the extension of the same logic. This structure facilitates the discovery, location, evaluation and acquisition of learning resources and allows tailoring of the resource descriptions to suit the specialised needs of a learning community (Barker, 2005). However, this classification is prepared to help locate learning objects among millions prepared globally on all sorts of subjects. Such systems are then excessive for the purposes of quickly locating objects such as pretyped comments which are developed on one particular topic, for example, training in news writing, though the latter at some stage may contribute to the larger international system. Looking for a small chunk of instruction in the international metadata standard can probably be compared with having to locate a tiny fish egg in the oceans of other learning objects.

One instructional design with a narrow purpose of storing learning objects for online training was prepared for workplace e-learning of employees in a high-tech company in Slovenia by Rugelj (2002). The author called his design a ‘virtual textbook’ and the way learning objects were assembled a ‘knowledge tree’. The textbook was composed as a “collection of specific learning materials, prepared for particular subject of study” with the addition of the links to different external information resources (Rugelj, 2000, p. 1). The learning materials could have been located by a list of pointers to the relevant documents, built for each particular subject of instruction. A similar design was described by Chrysostomou & Papadopoulos (2005). There is no agreement on the content and organisation of virtual textbooks (also called online or e-books). Some authors also highlight the benefits of e-content based on

---

<sup>33</sup> The Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, or IEEE, based in the US-based, is the world’s largest non-profit professional association dedicated to advancing technological innovation and excellence for the benefit of humanity. The Learning Object Metadata standard (1484.12.1-2002) was adopted as an international standard in 2002.

learning objects being organised through such concepts as hyperlinking, nonlinearity, data density, customisability, greater distribution, low costs, search ability, and other multimedia features (Shiratuddin, Hassan, & Landoni, 2003). Other authors suggest that such books must not be the primary learning content, but an additional resource which would make use of the Internet resources and move learners beyond content mastery towards more complex skills including information-seeking, problem solving, grasping multiple and diverse perspectives (Ince, 2004; Liaw, 2000). Mentioned in section 1.3.2.2 online news writing manual by Ingram & Henshall (2008) is written as a normal textbook and supplemented with three exercises and a searchable index. Whatever the content, such textbooks differ greatly from paper-based texts put online. One such example is the course *The writer's workbench: 50 tools you can use*, which is a digitised copy of the book "*Writing tools*" (Clark, 2006) mentioned in the introduction to this thesis. Such books do not exploit opportunities that the digital environment can provide.

Another way to assemble large amounts of chunked learning materials is discussed by Heinrich & Lawn (2004) and Heinrich (2007) who write that frequently used pretyped comments can be attached to a rubric and used as feedback to students, making the task of the marker "more efficient" (Heinrich, 2007, p. 271). If pretyped comments can be considered a basic type of learning objects (McGreal, 2004), then such organisation of learning objects is likely to combine the job of marking and assessment. However, it is unclear from the mentioned studies how exactly the pretyped comments can be connected to the rubric and it is also unclear whether they are also linked to the students' assignments and whether such alignment is indeed designed to provide assessment and not only to serve as a repository for the pretyped comments.

The fact that learning objects can also contain assessment opportunities has been mentioned by Gallenson et al. (2002), but the authors did not describe the mechanism of implementing the assessment. Smith (2004) pointed out that combining learning objects with assessment is a "complex topic" (p. 9). She wrote that learning objects "typically do not include built-in assessment" explaining it by the difficulty of finding the appropriate format of assessment. Therefore creating the mechanism of combining learning objects with assessment based on the scoring rubric format by using some sort of a coding system may serve well for training purposes.

As mentioned above, pretyped comments as part of feedback are gaining popularity among markers of assignments. For the purposes of this research recontextualising of pretyped comments by turning them into digital learning objects customised to various levels of competencies, and upgrading them with assessment is likely to enrich feedback during online training and steer the trainees towards the planned learning outcomes. In the next section

learning objects will be analysed for the opportunities they may provide if they serve as elements of feedback and learning during online training.

### *1.5.3. Upgrading feedback to the status of learning objects for larger learning experiences*

The target of corrective feedback — or advice, guidance on how to improve, and assessments by an instructor given on assignments — is to close the knowledge gaps of the learners between the existing levels of competencies and the planned outcomes (Black & William, 1998; Ramaprasad, 1983) and is considered to have high educational value (Black & William, 1998; Sadler, 1998; Yorke, 2003). Hattie (1987), who conducted a review of 87 meta-analyses of what affects student achievements, found that the most powerful single influence is provided by feedback. When giving feedback, markers are expected to outline strengths and weaknesses in the work of the learners which is likely to steer them towards the planned outcomes of the course (Linn & Miller, 2005; Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2004; Nitko, 2004).

The job of giving comprehensive corrective feedback is “time intensive” (Gibbs & Simpson, 2004; Plimmer & Mason, 2006, p. 3) especially when instructors have to reiterate the same comments, as different students make similar mistakes, and as the same students repeat the same mistakes over and over again (Cooper, 2000). Sets of pretyped comments are hoped to increase the efficiency of the time spent on marking (Brown & Knight, 1994; Case, 2007; Cooper, 2000), including in the e-learning setting (Denton, 2003; Heinrich, 2007; Heinrich & Lawn, 2004; McLachlan-Smith & Irons, 1998; Zhang & Heinrich, 2005).

These pretyped comments may be considered to be the basic predecessors of the learning objects, or the simplest level of the learning object (McGreal, 2004). However, a few issues need to be looked into before they can be efficiently used as feedback or upgraded to become a learning object. Firstly, when the comments are inserted in the original document, the flow of the work is upset (Plimmer & Mason, 2004). When they are provided separately — either on paper, or electronically there is a high chance that students will ignore them (Case, 2007; Elton & Johnston, 2002; Hounsell, 1987). Case, as well as Brown & Knight, (1994), suggest that to fix the problem the comments may be numbered and only the numbers are inserted in the marked documents, while the comments may be given separately. As suggested in the previous section, one realistic way to store and use such comments is to attach them to the scoring rubric (Heinrich, 2007; Heinrich & A Lawn, 2004). One way to do this is to code the descriptors in the scoring rubrics using criteria as parent categories and levels of quality and descriptors as sub-elements of lower levels. Clickable codes can be then inserted in the text of the assignments as hyperlinks to direct the trainees to the relevant comments.

There is also no reason why such comments cannot be upgraded to become full-fledged learning objects, which means that together with providing feedback as a chunk of relatively short pretyped comment as a small teaching experience, the instructor can suggest a student undertake a piece of self-regulated learning in the format of a self-contained learning object which can be also appended with further discussion with the instructor. The learning object can contain any materials mentioned above including images, videos, audios and animations, but in the case of journalism training in a busy and loud editorial office it may at least include text-based materials: that is, more extensive explanatory materials, exercises, examples, links to external teaching materials and other useful training substances to provide learning experiences<sup>34</sup>. These materials should be all chunked in small pieces and connected to the main comment by hyperlinks. As different studies have labelled as drawbacks of learning the problem that course materials are too rigid to take into account the learners' needs and aptitudes (Bransford, et al., 1999; Learning Objects – Does Size Matter? , " n.d.), such organisation of learning materials is likely to individualise online training. Provided that learning objects are attached to each descriptor in the scoring rubric, learning experiences that the trainee can undergo have the potential to suit any combination of individual professional weaknesses and thus ensure that the online training is tailor-made for each trainee.

The ability to learn from learning objects in accordance with the trainees' aptitudes is also likely to serve as scaffolding, a pedagogical tool that is described as a process helping a novice to achieve an outcome that is beyond their unassisted efforts by providing support for the initial performance and later removing it so that the task is performed without assistance (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976). Using learning objects customised to the trainees' current levels of competence that is identified by using a scoring rubric for assessment provides scaffolding which is relevant to the specific aptitudes. In addition, by using hyperlinks to higher levels of competencies, the trainee is likely to improve the performance further.

## **1.6. Framing the discussion**

The results of the experiment will be assessed within the framework of cognitive load theory which deals with the design of instructional methods that efficiently use people's limited cognitive processing capacity to transfer new knowledge and skills to other contexts (Paas, Tuovinen, Tabbers, & van Gerven, 2003). This theory is especially important to explain the acquisition of complex skills (Paas & Merriënboer, 1994) which news writing undoubtedly is.

---

<sup>34</sup> Audio materials can also be used provided reporters use headphones to avoid creating noise in the editorial office

The cognitive load theory understands learning as recognising important facets of the new material, mentally organising it in a coherent structure and integrating it with pre-existing knowledge and skills by engaging in substantial cognitive processing (Mayer & Moreno, 2003).

Available literature on the theory of cognitive load shows that the reserves of the working memory depend on the previous knowledge of the learner — for instance, ordinary chess players can correctly reproduce the position of about 6 figures on the board after an exposure of 5 to 10 seconds, while grandmasters and masters can recall the position of about 20 to 25 figures (Simon, 1974). However, no available literature recommends even an approximate range for the training load that journalists can process in one go. The definition of working capacity is apparently a theoretical framework which is useful to explain cognitive processes, but which cannot be employed to precisely instruct on what can be measured as ‘one cognitive unit’ or ‘chunk’ to then be used to compose instructional units which would not under- or overload the trainee.

## **Conclusions**

Despite the obvious shift in the modern educational paradigm to learn using the Web, the apparent trends of moving workplace learning online and the lack of journalism training in developing countries which could change the style of reporting inherited from previous regimes to the better modern standards, there is lack of professional web-based courses and a lack of instructional design which could successfully address the core problems in the real situation of a busy editorial office and bring about the needed changes

Among available e-learning resources no courses specially designed for long-term online workplace training of journalists in news writing have been found

Online training for busy journalists could be based on microcontent so that journalists may fit their training sessions into short breaks during their working time

Pretyped comments used as part of feedback can serve as the basis for learning objects to which other learning materials could be hyperlinked for online training so that the set constitutes a learning object

Learning objects may be attached to the scoring rubric by setting up a system that would codify each descriptor in the rubric

A coding system may include parent categories (news writing criteria) and sub-elements (levels of quality and descriptors in each cell of a scoring rubric)

By inserting the codes into texts of news stories written by trainees marking, assessment and instruction may be combined. In addition, the flow of the texts will not be upset by extensive comments, the trainees will be provided with the customised learning materials and they will be able to monitor the changes of their own competencies throughout the training period

The system of alignment of learning objects with assessment and news stories through a specially developed coding system may be labeled a ‘scoring e-textbook’, or SET.

## Hypotheses

In this research, the following hypotheses were tested:

First hypothesis: It was hypothesised that textual and statistical analysis of the representations of the most important elements of news writing in literature and news stories and testing its results on highly qualified journalism experts may be used to create a weighted, comprehensive and user-friendly online scoring rubric

Second hypothesis: It was hypothesized that an online textbook based on microcontent may be aligned with descriptors in the online scoring rubric and may serve as the basis of instructional design for workplace online training of inexperienced reporters in news writing by providing an efficient combination of self-regulated learning and formative assessment, and that such a design may individualise instruction, shorten the time spent by an instructor on marking and improve reporters’ news writing skills to an internationally acceptable level of quality without the need to take time off work

The research was organised in several stages:

1. Literature was analysed to find out what standards of news writing are used as bases for news writing training of reporters in developing and transitional countries, what types of training are used to master news writing skills, the advantages and problems of online training and learning, and what tools are used for training and assessment online.
2. An online scoring rubric, or news texts assessment system (NTA1), was created with the help of literature analysis and tested in a pilot experiment (4-month long online training) on its workability. The experiment showed that the initial length of the NTA1 (30 criteria) took too much time to use. The experiment is not described in this thesis.
3. NTA1 was then tested with the help of highly qualified journalism experts including trainers, editors and academics, and the data then subjected to correlation and factor analysis which allowed it to be shortened to 13 criteria and provide weighting to every cell of the rubric. It was labelled NTA.
4. The NTA was tested on its workability in the second pilot experiment (another 4-month long online training), in which several digital learning modules consisting of instructional texts, examples, and exercises were also created and tested. The experiment showed that while the 13-criteria NTA worked well, learning modules



should be expanded in numbers and content, which was thought would greatly reduce the demand on the instructor's time. This stage of research is also not described in this thesis.

5. A scoring e-textbook, or SET, was then constructed as the alignment between the descriptors in the NTA and learning modules with the help of a coding system. Over 500 learning modules were created and appended with forums between the trainees and the instructor and some enriched with quizzes. The SET became the basis for the online training programme to train journalists in news writing.
6. The online training programme was tested for its workability and its ability to enable reporters to achieve an internationally accepted news writing level in a real working situation in an agency in Azerbaijan. Reporters posted news stories they prepared as routine working assignments on the online training website. After receiving assessment by the NTA, reporters then self-trained with the help of learning modules, communicated with the trainer if needed, and monitored their progress if any.
7. To evaluate the results of the experiment, the achievements of the trainees were compared with their baseline assessments, their answers to the questionnaire were studied, and the time spent by the instructor on marking stories with and without SET was compared.

## Chapter 2. Methodology and Organisation of the Research and the Experiment

### Introduction

Action research has been chosen as the basis for this research as it is a popular version of research design when various adjustments to instructional process are tested including in organisations, (McNiff & Whitehead, 2000), higher educational institutions (Cooper, 2000; Zuber-Skerritt, 1992), other educational institutions specialised in teaching (Cardno & New Zealand Council for Educational Research., 2003; Charteris & Christchurch College of Education. Teacher Qualifications Centre., 2001; Tomal, 2003; Williams, Cervin, & Massey University. School of Social and Cultural Studies., 2004) including in online instructional settings (Chellman, 2000). Part of the action research design is that the researchers act as teachers during such experiments.

Action research is usually conducted in several stages of which the first is the diagnostic stage, in which the researcher examines the problem and creates the hypotheses. It is followed by an intervention stage, usually of a small-scale, in which the hypotheses are tested in an experiment in situ (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007), while observations and reflections are being conducted (Lewin, 1948). Instructors conducting research is believed to lead to improvement in the quality of education (Elliott, 1991; Kember & NetLibrary Inc., 2000; McNiff, Lomax, & Whitehead, 2000).

According to the guidelines for conducting action research, this study included several parts: creation of the news texts assessment system, or NTA1, testing it by highly qualified journalism professionals, shortening it to a user-friendly version, testing in two pilot experiments for its workability (this experiment is not described in this research for space reasons, but a short part is presented in Chapter 4), creating sets of learning objects for instruction that correspond to each element of the NTA (this system was named e-scoring textbook, or SET), linking the NTA and SET as the main tools in the online training programme and test them in the experiment. Observations by the researcher and reflections by both researchers and trainees were made in the course of the experiment and after its completion.

In action research the researchers are often at the same time instructors who are introducing some novelty into the traditional way the things are done (Chellman, 2000; Elliott, 1991; Kember & NetLibrary Inc., 2000; Stringer, 1996). This researcher, who created the web-based training tools, was at the same time the instructor of the online experiment.

## 2.1. Creation of the first version of the NTA

The construction of a scoring rubric (in this thesis called the news text assessment, or NTA) is a complex task and needs to be approached systematically. A thorough review of journalistic literature was used to devise specific categories (see Chapter 3), but first the principles of its construction must be established. Table 2 summarises the principles drawn from the literature review in the previous chapter in five classes.

**Table 2. Guiding principles of constructing a scoring rubric**

<i>Class</i>	<i>Guidelines, authors</i>
1. Formulation of outcomes	The expected goals and outcomes of the learning process should be clear and reachable (Moskal, 2003)
2. Structure	<p>Scoring categories should be well defined and the differences between the score categories clear</p> <p>The set of pre-determined criteria, or standards, must be based on shared understanding of competency within the industry (Giles, 1988; Maki, 2004; B. Moskal, 2003; Neil, et al., 1999)</p> <p>Each criterion must be broken down to clear descriptors of the different levels of quality (Delandshere &amp; Petrosky, 1998; Simonson, Smaldino, Albright, &amp; Zvacek, 2006), which both the instructors and the learners must be able to observe and act upon (Mertler, 2001; Moskal, 2003)</p> <p>The level of proficient performance — in which rubrics usually represents the target level of quality — should be clearly identified (Brookhart, 1999, quoted in Moskal, 2000)</p> <p>The descriptors should be specific, easily distinguishable from one another, be teachable and short so as not to overwhelm the instructors (Popham, 1997)</p> <p>The ‘minimum-essentials’ (or ‘cut-off-score’) level should be defined to state the lowest level of acceptable performance (Gronlund, 2000)</p> <p>The level of excellence at which the “work shines” should also be established (Goodrich Andrade, 2000, p. 15) to show the way to top performance</p>
3. Engagement of the trainees	<p>Standards and descriptors used in the rubric must be meaningful and authentic so that the learners are able to see how the criteria used to judge their performance make sense for their job (Boud, 1995; Delandshere &amp; Petrosky, 1998; Giles, 1988; Martin &amp; Penrod, 2006) as opposed to being idiosyncratic so that the learners have to develop skills to accommodate what they do not really need, just to satisfy their instructors (Andrade &amp; Du, 2005)</p> <p>Rubrics should engage the learners and stimulate thinking and learning by helping them to identify their weaknesses and showing them ways to improve (Goodrich Andrade, 2000)</p>
4. Fairness	The assessment should strive to be objective despite it being essentially a judgmental instrument (Linn, Baker, & Dunbar, 1991)

	The descriptions should be designed in a way that reduces the possibility of raters making subjective judgments (Giles, 1988)
5. Weighting	<p>The rubric should be weighted to give prominence to its more important elements (Arter &amp; McTighe, 2001)</p> <p>Descriptions of poor performance can be given negative weightings to stimulate the learner's attention to the poor levels of quality of their work (Patel &amp; Russell, 2002; Speere, 2002)</p>

These guidelines show the complexities of the creation of the scoring rubric. One of the most complicated issues is the need to clearly separate the dimensions, or categories which the scoring rubric consists of, to avoid overlapping descriptors. This is extremely difficult to do because various categories of writing need to be assessed as opposed to many other assessment formats that assess a complex of work-related categories such as behaviours, products and attitudes. Ways to resolve the issue of overlapping will be discussed in each specific case in Chapter 3. The system to assess the quality of news stories was created by assigning various descriptors of performances within each criterion to each cell of the scoring rubric. The 30-criterion 5-category rubric was named the first version of the news texts assessment system, or NTA1.

The assessment tool should be comprehensive enough for the learners to understand their shortcomings and small enough not to deter instructors from using it. This was eventually resolved to an extent<sup>35</sup> by putting the NTA online, creating instructional modules to explain each descriptor of the NTA and linking the modules to the NTA by a specially created coding system. This instrument, which was labelled a scoring e-textbook, or SET, is described in Chapter 5.

The NTA1 was created as a result of analysis of literature on assessments in pedagogy and performance appraisal instruments, and existing tools to assess the quality of journalistic news writing. The instructional scoring rubric format has been chosen because it is the most convenient and popular for assessing complex performances in pedagogy (Arter & McTighe, 2001; Mertler, 2001; Moskal, 2000, 2003; Nitko, 2004; Simonson, et al., 2009).

An instructional scoring rubric needs to contain specific descriptors of various levels of performance so that the trainees not only see the grades but also see the descriptions of their performance (Dornisch & McLoughlin, 2006; Simonson, et al., 2009). Further analysis of literature was conducted (see Chapter 3) to create a taxonomy of such descriptors. Journalistic educational, academic and online instructional literature posted on various journalistic online resources were analysed to identify the structure and the content of the scoring rubric (NTA).

---

<sup>35</sup> It was deemed impossible to create a page-long scoring rubric to assess the quality of news stories other than creating a holistic rubric. But the latter is not helpful for instructional purposes

Also taken into account was the experience of this researcher in conducting online evaluation of the quality of news articles with the help of a dichotomous system of assessment that included more than 190 elements<sup>36</sup>. As a result of analysis of journalistic textbooks on news writing (Adams, 1998; Dawkins & Inman, 1998; Friend, Challenger, & McAdams, 2000; Galtung & Ruge, 1965; Gibbs & Warhover, 2002; Keeble, 1994; Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001; McGregor, 2002; Mencher, 1994; Murray, 2000; Palmer, 2000; Randall, 1996; Scanlan, 2000; Tucker, 2004), five categories that represent different aspects of the quality of news stories were identified: 'Newsworthiness', 'Credibility and Factual Quality', 'Meaning', 'Style' and 'Structure'. Several dozen elements were considered to form the content of these categories (see section 3.1.1). Further analysis in Chapter 3 allowed the exclusion of overlapping elements and selection of the most distinctive and representative of them, which were most extensively addressed in professional journalistic literature in online journalistic resources including [www.poynter.org](http://www.poynter.org), [www.asne.org](http://www.asne.org) and [www.mediadoctor.org.au](http://www.mediadoctor.org.au), and in the literature on appraisal of the quality of news reporting (Giles, 1988; Moynihan, 2000; Speere, 2002).

A taxonomy of the descriptors for the NTA was next created, parallel to allocating them the cells in the scoring rubric that they best fit into. This proves to be rather easy when standard performances were described, because most textbooks specifically describe or give examples of the quality of texts that is expected. Many textbooks also describe bad performances. However, creating descriptors for intermediate performances is more complicated because of the complexity of news writing.

Setting writing norms differs greatly from setting technical norms or rules for easily observed performances, such as, for example, compliance with the road code. While it is internationally accepted that a red traffic light prohibits moving forward, there are no shades of the red that would signal other road activities: for instance, it being unacceptable to move forward slowly on the dark red, or being able to turn left on the pink. There is also no excellent performance: you just stop for the red light. But in a complex and ill-defined domain such as journalism there are no rigidly set rules that would regulate every possible element that comprises a news story, despite there being a consensus in journalism on the main values and norms of good and bad quality.

The process of the creation of the 5-category 30-criterion scoring rubric with 5 quality gradations ('unacceptable', 'inappropriate', 'acceptable', 'good', and 'outstanding') and many descriptors of various observable performances in each cell is described in Chapter 3. The

---

<sup>36</sup> This system was developed in 2000-2006 when this researcher conducted eight long-term online training programmes teaching journalists to write news in six post-USSR countries

NTA 1 is presented in Table 26. The NTA was then tested for its readability, which involved a series of unstructured interviews with several experienced news writing experts including sub-editors and journalists in New Zealand, the United States and Britain. Some workings of several descriptors was changed as a result, some were added and some dropped for space reasons.

## **2.2. Scaling the news texts assessment system**

The testing of the NTA1 was designed to achieve the following goals:

- weighting its elements (to be able to add up the weights and create a total score for news texts)
- shortening it (by eliminating the descriptors that cause confusion or are understood differently by different coders and by combining elements close in meaning)
- checking its construct validity and reliability.

To create a weighted rubric it is postulated that while evaluating a news text, each assessment criterion representing a news writing style or standard can not only be measured according to its quality from the worst to the best, but also that its share of the total score for the article, or weight, is different. In available publications that use assessment of various news writing elements for academic, learning or practical purposes three approaches are usually used. In one approach the authors assigned a set score to the chosen criteria and added them up for the total score (Rosenstiel et al., 2007). In other approaches a scoring rubric used Likert-type scales from 1 to 3, 1 to 5 or 1 to 7 (Aiken, 1996), or levels ‘novice’, ‘apprentice’, ‘proficient’ and ‘distinguished’ were created (Hirumi, 2002). In another approach the coder assigned values to the performance according to his/her own judgment (Tretyakov, 2007). These approaches allow the quality of performance in each individual criterion to be measured and then total score or a mean to be calculated. However, they do not take into account the need to emphasize bad performance by assigning it particularly low weights (Patel & Russell, 2002; Speere, 2002). For instance, 1 point for bad punctuation would not be the same as 1 point for a misspelled name or address. While punctuation is easy for subeditors or proofreaders to fix, a grave mistake could have serious negative consequences, which in some media can be punished by firing a reporter. Therefore, giving each criterion equal weight is inappropriate and may raise doubts with inquisitive reporters. As a consequence, it is deemed better to create a system that takes the relative value of each element of assessment into account.

However, interviewing journalism experts about the weight that they would assign to various elements was rejected. Firstly, there is no agreement on the definitions of the elements. Secondly, in different types of stories each element may have different value. Therefore it was decided that it was not the elements of news writing, but the news texts, that need to be

rated to create a scale for the NTA. Therefore, the experts are not rating the significance of various elements for news writing, but assessing the quality of different criteria by choosing the appropriate descriptors in the NTA1.

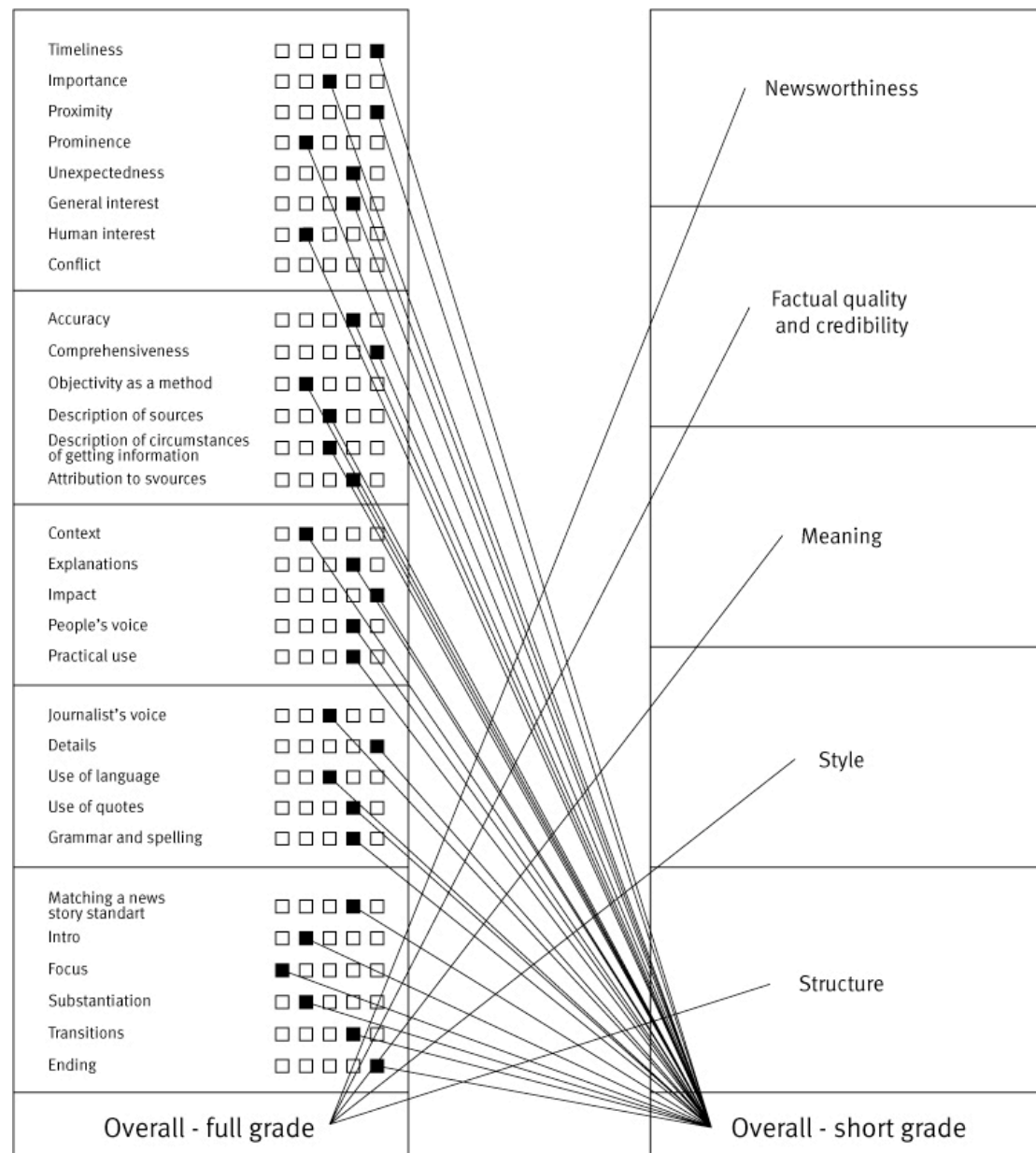
The research was conducted in 2006 and 2007. Two sets of five articles were prepared for the assessment. Each set contained three articles of average quality, one of poor and one of high quality. The articles were supposed to embrace all or most of the assessment criteria. The articles, most from 300 to 700 words long, were taken from two main sources: English-language publications in the western press and those written by journalists from post-communist countries and filed for this researcher's online training programmes conducted from 2001 to 2005. The choice of these articles was made because many mistakes typical of journalism in the post-Communist countries are rarely made by western journalists. For instance, putting their own byline on a press release or an advertisement and presenting it as their own story is not good practice in western media. The articles are presented in Appendix 1. They were translated into English with the style and the grammar of their authors being preserved as closely as possible. The instructions to the coders (see Appendix 2) specified that these articles should be assessed in the same way as the articles from western publications. All the articles dealt with matters of high or moderate social importance.

The coders are asked to evaluate 5 articles using the 30-criteria NTA1 (further referred to as the 'full scheme' of assessment) and at the end to grade each article for its overall 'goodness' (further referred to as the 'overall full' grade) using a 5-point scale. The instructions suggest that the coders should: underline the relevant description (or several relevant descriptions in the cells with many descriptions) or tick cells with only one description. If the coders think the right description is missing, they are asked to write down the description they think is appropriate in a 'comment' line in the relevant column and row of the NTA1. The coders can also opt to rate the performance as falling between the descriptions and to justify such coding in the 'comment' line of the NTA1. The coders are encouraged to provide suggestions on the content of the descriptors or their wording in the 'comment' line. If some criteria are considered inapplicable for some stories, the coders can ignore them. Another set of 5 articles is also evaluated for the 'goodness' of each article (this grade will be further referred to as the 'overall short' grade) and for the quality of each of 5 categories of the NTA1 (this scheme will be further referred to as the 'short scheme').

Both types of overall grades were further used as external measures in the correlation analysis to create the NTA. Using relations to external variables is recommended to validate performance-based assessments by Miller & Linn (2000). The overall-short grades served as external measures of 'goodness' to which the ratings of 30 criteria, assigned by the raters who used the full scheme were correlated. The overall-full grade was the external measure of the

‘goodness’ to which the ratings of the categories assigned by the raters who used the short scheme were correlated. This design is described in the schema in Figure 8. The left column represents the names of the criteria, the cells represent the quality level. The right column represents the categories.

**Figure 8. The schema of scaling the NTA**



Each expert read and assessed the articles in random order, which was defined with the help of a table of random numbers to avoid any halo effects which may be caused by reading the articles in the same order (Aiken, 1996; Bernardin & Beatty, 1984). Research shows that if a better text is assessed before poorer work, then the latter may be assessed more harshly and, the opposite, if a better work is preceded by a text of lesser quality it may be assessed more favourably (Moir, Massey, Baird, & Morrissy, 2002; Spear, 1997).



Before proceeding to the assessment, the coders were presented with the NTA1 and explanations about its construction, creation, and aim, was explained. Questions, if any, were answered.

The first article was assessed using the full assessment scheme. The second article was assessed using the short scheme. Then, each rater read the next four pairs of articles, assessing the first of each pair using the full scheme, and the second using the short scheme.

The coders were not trained for the assessment job but provided only with instructions on the technicalities of filling out the assessments. The reason for the absence of training is that the coders are supposed to use their own expertise and ideas on how to evaluate news stories against the descriptors in the NTA, and in fact the range of their disagreements is what is important for this research. Firstly, the range of disagreements affect the strengths of the correlations between the elements, and so allowed the weightings of elements in the rubric discussed above to be created. Secondly, these disagreements serve as analysis points to find faults in the NTA and subsequently upgrade and shorten it.

Only highly qualified and experienced coders were asked to participate in this research. They were selected on the basis of availability, because all of them are busy professionals including academics and practitioners. Some of those approached refused to participate because they could not find the time.

Among the 23 raters who conducted the assessments in this research were 3 heads of journalism departments; 3 senior lecturers and one associate professor in journalism; 4 former editors; 4 journalism trainers and training editors; and several deputy editors, news editors or chief subeditors. Three newsroom journalism trainers and one associate professor were based in the United States. This author took the opportunity of her visit to the US in October 2006 to interview these experts. All the other experts were based in New Zealand. Nine experts performed the assessments in the presence of this researcher and in these cases the time spent on the process was measured. The whole procedure took from 50 minutes to three hours with an average of about two hours, depending on the individual pace of work. Most experts preferred to perform the assessment on their own after the rating process was explained to them in person and all the articles and the rubrics were provided in a package with the written instructions. All the United States-based journalism trainers took this option. Two experts were approached by email and performed the assessments following the instructions posted to them without face-to-face explanations. One of these experts requested additional explanations by telephone. Fourteen assessments were mailed back. Eighteen assessments, which were explained at individual face-to-face meetings were not returned and some experts said they did not complete the assessments because they had no time. The return rate, which

does not take into account the nine assessments completed in face-to-face sessions was 43.8 per cent.

The mechanism of scaling the news texts assessment system and creating the 13-criterion NTA is fully described in Chapter 4.

### **2.3. Organisation of the experiment**

A group of staff reporters with little or no experience in news writing participated in the experiment, conducted within one news agency in Azerbaijan. As mentioned in the introduction for this research, the name of the agency will not be revealed for fear of possible reprisals for the agency or its journalists. Therefore, the journalists were given pseudonyms for the convenience of the narrative in this research.

Azerbaijan is a Muslim-dominated country in the South Caucasus, a former USSR republic with an autocratic regime. Its population is traumatised by a long-term frozen military conflict with the neighbouring country, Armenia, over the mountainous region of Nagorny Karabakh which Armenia occupied after a short war in 1994. Azerbaijan was a good choice for this research because if the training tools could be proven to work in this country, they could most probably work in any other post-Communist country with very small changes in content.

This agency — further referred to as the ‘Agency’ — was recommended to this researcher by the Washington-based International Research and Exchange foundation (IREX), to which the director of the agency applied for help seeking an editorial consultant. Before the main experiment was conducted from September to December 2008, two online training programmes were conducted in the Agency as pilot action studies. They were funded by IREX, and reporters were trained by this researcher. In the first pilot the online scoring rubric was tested for its workability, but all the marking was done by this researcher by hand, which, as other researchers point out, was time-consuming and extremely laborious (Case, 2007; Heinrich, 2007). It was during the second pilot experiment conducted in the spring of 2008 in which the NTA was tested that the idea crystallised on how to attach instructional materials prepared in advance to various descriptors in the NTA. The participants spoke highly about the opportunity, and it was also less laborious for the instructor. Most of the instructional texts were prepared during that pilot experiment. The results of the pilot experiments will not be used in this thesis for two reasons. Firstly, because of space constraints, and, secondly, they cannot serve as an adequate basis of comparison with the results of the main experiment because of significant differences between the groups of journalists. In the first pilot experienced journalists including three desk editors and two deputy desk editors of the Agency participated and the main focus was to make the established journalists unlearn many

of their convictions and skills so they were able to learn and implement new knowledge and skills. In the experiment described in Chapter 6, the participants were novice reporters whose experience in writing news ranged from zero to four months.

The data about the participants is represented in Table 3.

**Table 3. Information about the participants in the experiment**

<i>Made-up name</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Experience in print journalism</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Previous participation in other training programmes</i>	<i>Native language, other languages</i>
Helen	22	1 month	Foreign languages	No	Russian, Azeri, English
Ellie	28	4 months	Biology	No	Russian, English
Dina	20	3 weeks	Oriental studies	No	Russian, Azeri, English, Persian
Vicky	21	0 (1 year of experience on TV)	Foreign economic relations	TV journalism training by Internews	Russian, English
Julia	19	2 months	Oriental studies, student	No	Russian, Azeri, Arabic, English
Norma	21	0	Finance, economics	No	Russian, Azeri
Edgar	25	3 months	Political science	No	Russian, Azeri, some English
Richard	24	1 month	Economics, finance	No	Russian, Azeri, some English

As can be seen from the table, the participants effectively just walked into the editorial office from the street. Most responded to an advertisement by the Agency inviting young ambitious professionals to try themselves in journalism, promising them an interesting job and competitive compensation. Their average experience in news journalism was less than 5 weeks. The number of the trainees is limited by the number of reporters that the Agency has for the training. However, there is also a limit on how many trainees one instructor can consult. According to Gold (2001), there are boundaries in the number of learners that one instructor can support in an online training framework. Gold considers that the optimal size of an online class is from 6 to 30 learners because the online facilitating experience is “time consuming” (p. 55).

The first five journalists in the list were hired to write news analyses, the other three news. Two of the three (Norma and Edgar) worked on the business desk. Such a variety of specialisation put a lot of pressure on the preparation of specific materials for training created to teach general news writing after the second pilot experiment. Some of the problems mentioned by reporters (see Chapter 6, in which the results of the experiment are described<sup>37</sup>) are due to multi-tasking by this researcher who had to add a lot of additional materials to the SET in a very short time.

## **2.4. Issues considered when designing the experiment**

Any type of education is usually understood as a process of an interaction between the instructor and the learner for the purpose of “identifying, understanding, and confirming worthwhile knowledge” (Garrison, 2003, p. 13). In an online setting, because of the distance between the teacher and the student, many specific issues need to be considered including different instructional techniques and the learning styles of the students (Peters, 2007). It appears the most important issue in online learning is overcoming the distance between the instructor and the learner. Critics of distance learning maintain that the physical presence of the instructor in the classroom is key to successful learning, but proponents of online education suggest distinguishing between two types of the distance: geographical and transactional (Bender, 2003; Moore & Kearsley, 1996; Saba & Shearer, 1994). A vast distance prohibiting transaction of knowledge and competencies can take place “under the teacher’s nose” if the learners are disengaged and not stimulated, writes Bender (2003, p. 6). At the same time the transactional distance can be overcome by both — the learners and the instructor:

[I]f a teacher, whether online or on campus, can establish meaningful educational opportunities, with the right degree of challenge and relevance, and can give students a feeling of responsibility for their own learning and a commitment to this process, then the transactional gap shrinks and no one feels remote from each other or from the source of learning (ibid).

It is active engagement of the learners in any type of online educational activities, not the physical presence of the instructor, that is considered to be the key to successful learning:

Students are obliged to become active, to assume responsibility, and to organize their learning with regard to time and location. In this situation they have many opportunities to become autonomous and self-regulated with regards to goals, methods, and media as well. Quite often, presentational teaching and receptive learning are substituted by activated self-learning (Peters, 2007, p. 61).

---

<sup>37</sup> For instance, lack of interactive exercises which were very popular: only about 80 were prepared

Active engagement of the learners is even more important when the instructors deal with busy professionals rather than students (Githens, 2006; Long, DuBois, & Faley, 2007).

In line with constructivist theories of education the learner-centred approach is chosen as the main pedagogical method of the online training. The trainees are understood as individuals with their own life and professional experiences, habits and education (or its absence), who will hardly be engaged by a classroom mode of learning which includes prepared lectures and some subjects to learn. As the experience of this researcher in conducting classroom-based seminars for journalists shows, several simple reasons that journalists hardly acquire any competencies at such training sessions are that some of them may already know the issues, some are preoccupied by other things important for them, and some may resist the new knowledge. It was believed that engagement in online learning may be achieved by addressing the content the journalists are working on. Therefore, the texts of news stories written by journalists as their work assignments constitute the main content of the training. This approach is also in line with pragmatism as an educational theory, practised by John Dewey, who believed that engagement of learners and their attention depended on getting the learners involved in real-life challenges, should be connected with the learners' past experiences and make them sense some measurable benefit from their learning in the future (Dewey, 1969, 1979).

While activity and initiative of the learners are key, there are other organisational and didactical principles that took shape in the past two decades that distance teaching and learning practices<sup>38</sup> greatly increased worldwide in volumes and varieties. The principles which were taken into account when creating the content of the online training for working journalists are listed in Table 4 and supplied with explanations of the way these principles are utilised in the online training conducted in the experimental part of this research or the justifications of why they are not used.

**Table 4. Organisational and didactical principles of online learning and training, conditions and suggestions that help to make it successful**

<i>Principles, source</i>	<i>Explanation of how the principles are used in the experiment conducted in this research</i>
General principles	
Online learning should be accessible (Garrison, 2003)	A specially developed training website protected by login and password from unauthorised entry is prepared for the training and is accessible by a personal login for all the

<sup>38</sup> Also known as online teaching and learning, e-teaching and e-learning, web-based teaching and learning, or computer-assisted teaching and learning

	training participants on demand. Journalists access the website at work during breaks between assignments, before or after working hours. Some also work from home on personal computers
The learning experience must have a clear purpose with tightly focused outcomes and objectives (Burdick, 2010; Seok, 2007)	The purpose of the training is to improve the quality of news stories written by novice journalists who participate in this research by achieving the overall 'acceptable' level of quality of news stories as assessed using the NTA. All the participants are aware of the purpose and share its significance for their work
The benefits for the learner must be obvious, and the learning content must be relevant (Burdick, 2010)	The training is structured in a way that it addresses the specific deficiencies in news writing skills of each trainee, and therefore it is apparent for each of them how they can benefit from the training. Additional explanations are provided if required in synchronous or asynchronous communication
The learner must be actively engaged (Bender, 2003; Burdick, 2010; Graham, Cagiltay, Lim, Craner, & Duffy, 2001; Peters, 2007; Seok, 2007)	The journalists focus only on their own specific issues, that is, to learn from their mistakes in news articles they publish. They have to read specially prepared instructional materials in the SET to understand their mistakes and to analyse them against examples of better writing, do exercises, rewrite chunks of their news articles in which they have made the mistakes (these are all elements of the SET), and communicate with the trainer. Assessment of their stories by the trainer is also designed to stimulate their active engagement and make them responsible for the results of their training
Construction of content	
Learners should be given challenging tasks and sample cases (Graham, Cagiltay, Lim, Craner, & Duffy, 2001)	Each instructional material in the SET contains bad examples (with explanations why they are bad) and good examples. Content of the exercises is challenging and arranged from simpler to more complicated
Online instruction should be personalised (Anderson & Adams, 1992; Hanna, Glowacki-Dudka, & Concerigao-Runlee, n.d.) and include not only support and encouragement, but also "ample feedback, being a good role model, being appropriately informal, and eliciting discussion" (Bender, 2003, p. 11)	The instructional materials are prepared for the specific audience and take cultural and national elements into account. For instance, many examples and topics of discussion with the trainees are borrowed or adapted from published stories written by journalists in the specific country. Instructional elements in the SET have been tailor-made for five different levels of performance in each criterion and the instructor has only to insert links to relevant modules into the marked texts next to mistakes or deficiencies. Communication with the instructor will also help to support the personal connection between the trainee and the instructor.
Instructional materials should not focus solely on negative behaviour in order not to reinforce it. If this is necessary, they should be balanced with the preferred or intended outcome (Burdick, 2010)	Negative examples are necessary in the instructional materials so that the trainees can contextualise their mistakes in a number of other situations and understand the problem better. These examples are immediately balanced with the examples describing the intended outcome and each piece of material on the 'unacceptable', 'inappropriate', and even 'appropriate' levels of

	performance is hyperlinked with the instructional modules in which ‘good’ and, sometimes, ‘outstanding’ levels of performance are described
E-learning should encourage critical thinking (Seok, 2007)	Instructional materials are prepared in the way that they encourage the development of higher order thinking skills including analysis, synthesis and evaluation. To improve their performance, journalists have to analyse examples in the instructional modules, transfer the conclusions into their own writing, and critically review the assessment of their stories provided by the trainer. Disagreements and debates with the trainer are encouraged to develop critical thinking and independence of the trainees
Problem-based learning should be used as well as knowledge-based (Seok, 2007)	During the training, journalists have to do exercises in instructional modules based on solving problems in news texts
Learning styles should be taken into account (Burdick, 2010, Peters, 2007)	Using this guideline in online training is difficult. Instead, a variety of training activities are suggested for the trainees in the instructional modules so that they can choose their preferred ways of learning. The training website also contains various elements that are believed to engage some trainees and not attract the others.
Interaction and feedback	
Learning experiences should support interaction and co-operation between the students and the development of communities of interest (Graham, et al., 2001; Seok, 2007)	This principle, which is appropriate for the university environment, is not used as part of the training activities here, because the workplace environment already has the element of constant interaction between the journalists. Interaction is recommended, however, to discuss focuses of news stories (for which all the trainees divide into pairs), and to get together to discuss difficult issues. This is sometimes done on Saturdays when the working day is short, and the remaining complications are asked to be explained by the trainees afterwards. These internal discussion groups are encouraged by the instructor, and four of them take place during the training period
Interactions between the learners and the instructor during online course is important, and students are more satisfied with the course offering more extensive communication (Delfino & Persico, 2007)	Three options are available for communication depending on the personal choice of the trainees and the time available. Communication by email or via the training website is available in asynchronous regime, while ICQ could be chosen if the trainees have time to correspond in real time. The trainees also have an option to challenge their colleagues through a special forum for all the participants of the training
Good practice of online learning gives prompt feedback. Ideally, instructors should give detailed personal feedback to each student (Graham, et al., 2001)	Personal feedback is the major element of the online training. The NTA prepared for assessment of the quality of news articles is used as the basis for marking the texts. While most feedback is given with the help of the SET, written messages, which are part of the reviews of news stories filed for the training, contain informal praise and any other evaluation issues which are not formalised in the instructional modules of the SET

Quiz/answer feedback should be immediate and corrective (Burdick, 2010)	All the quizzes contain the correct answer immediately after the trainees file their answer. In addition, explanations why the chosen version of the answer was wrong are also provided. All exercises in instructional modules of the SET are also interactive as they contain correct answers available after filing their own version of the answer
Use of peer-reviewing increases learning (Burdick, 2010)	Peer-reviewing is not used for one reason: working journalists are too busy to get involved in the extra activity
Responsibilities of the learners/trainees	
Online support does not have to always come from the trainer (Bonk, 2002)	The online training course is created so that corresponding with the instructor is the last resort for the journalists. The instructional modules include reading the instructional materials, studying examples, doing exercises (which have correct answers available just after journalists file their answers), resolving quizzes and rewriting chunks of their own articles to correct their own mistakes. Only after that are journalists encouraged to approach the instructor with their questions. Alternatively, the instructor, who receives journalists' answers to exercises by email generated automatically by the training website, can get in touch if some issues that need to be clarified are identified in the results of self-regulated training. Journalists are also encouraged to discuss difficult issues with each other
The learners should be responsible for constructing their own meaning from the educational process and should have intrinsic motivation to learn (Garrison, 1997, 2003; Suthers, et al., 2007)	One of the conditions set before the journalists are admitted to participate in the training is their own will to learn in order to improve their performance. It is the trainees' responsibility whether to use or decline to use any of the elements of the instructional modules in the SET as well as to accept the new knowledge, or to doubt and to discuss it with the trainer
The learners should be allowed to choose project topics (Graham, et al., 2001)	Workplace training is based on providing the journalists' feedback on the articles they write and published as part of their work assignments. They are not given special assignments
Learning environment	
Learning environment must be conducive, physically comfortable, non-threatening, and supportive of experimentation and discovery (Burdick, 2010)	Most training takes place at the workplace, in the busy and noisy editorial office, usually before and after work, or in breaks between assignments. This is not the best situation for learning, but the fact that any learning that occurs can be immediately applied in practice, is supportive of experimentation and discovery.
Instruction should contain praise for quality work (Graham, et al., 2001)	As is known from theory and the experience of this researcher in online training, some trainees are highly sensitive to low assessment grades. Therefore allowing others to see the assessments is made optional. Access has to be expressly permitted by the trainee, and it can be turned off at the request of the trainee.  Another uncomfortable situation is known to occur when the learners receive a story that has been heavily marked.



	To prevent the discomfort, the trainees are warned about it in the introduction to the training and have to assess their perception of criticism in the first short questionnaire before they started training. A great effort is also made to find some positive element in any story and give some praise in the introduction to any marked copy. This is not always possible
Active interaction between the learners and the instructors improves the teaching-learning environment and facilitates learning (Holmberg, 1995; Nichols, 2001; Garrison, 1993)	Correspondence with the journalists is organised in three ways: online via ICQ <sup>39</sup> and offline by email and through the website. Corresponding by using Skype <sup>40</sup> proves not to be successful because of the low quality of connection
Use of technology	
A variety of media must be appropriately used (Seok, 2007). However, the instructor should use it sparingly. If, for example, imagery does not augment the message but provide a distraction, it should not be used (Burdick, 2010)	Working with textual instructional materials is deemed sufficient for achieving the target of the training of journalists, whose job is writing news texts. Some instructional texts contain images. Three types of delivering educational messages are used: texts on the training website, some of which have imagery, email, and ICQ system of instant messaging. However, some other media can be added to the instruction provided this addition does not create unneeded cognitive load on the trainees
Organisation of online learning/training	
Online courses should have relevant deadlines (Graham, et al., 2001)	Every journalist has to file one news story for marking and assessing every two weeks. In the interval between the deadlines journalists are supposed to learn in the self-regulated mode: read instructional materials assigned to their marked copies, do exercises and other parts of training modules and communicate with the trainer
Instructors should provide clear guidelines for interaction with students (Graham, et al., 2001)	The guidelines are formulated in the FAQ on the website of the training and all the journalists are told that they can communicate with the trainer by email, ICQ or through the website
Instructors should take into account the obstacles that the trainees face (Burdick, 2010)	If a trainee is too busy and fails to meet the deadline, it is postponed for a later date agreed on by both the trainee and the instructor. The relevant editor in the office is approached for confirmation of the trainee's problem

In the following section the organisation of the training experiment is described, based on the guidelines discussed above.

---

<sup>39</sup> Instant messages computer program

<sup>40</sup> Software program that allows users to make free voice calls over the Internet

#### *2.4.1. Organisation of the online training experiment*

The SET is used as the content base for the online training (see the description of the SET in Chapter 5) that was conducted from early September to the end of December 2008. Prior to starting the online training, the journalists are given a paper-based textbook written by this researcher that contains an introduction to journalism, description of news journalism, importance of following news writing standards, and descriptions of the elements of news writing with examples. The journalists are advised to learn from the textbook at home in their spare time, so that they can start online training with some knowledge of what news journalism is about. Having read the textbook is a condition of being accepted for the online training. Before they start training, they are also told to read the introductory text on the front page of the training website that describes in detail every element of the training. The participants are warned that the success of the training lies with them and the instructor is only a consultant who will be helping them. The reporters also sign a consent form to participate in the training and in the research and answer a few questions in a short questionnaire. In one question they are required to assess their attitude to criticism. As no one who participated rated it lower than '4' they are not considered to belong to the risk group in which practitioners usually assign persons who are highly sensitive to assessment and should be treated specially.

Online training is organised in the following way: Reporters are given a timetable with submission deadlines once every two weeks for the duration of four months, and they have to submit their best published story by their deadline together with the link from the story to the website where it was published. The published stories are required for several reasons. First, in previous training conducted by this researcher one reporter had fabricated stories to receive better marks. Secondly, the standard of copy-editing in the Agency is so low, that only some language problems are fixed. Journalistic problems are never tackled. Thirdly, the number of language problems of the journalists, as the pilot experiments showed, are so high that the training is at risk of turning into teaching the rules of the language instead of addressing problems in news writing. Therefore, having some grammar and language problems fixed relieves the instructor from a lot of extra and unnecessary work.

The instructor then marks and assesses the trainees' stories as quickly as possible. Usually, because of the time difference between Azerbaijan and New Zealand, the trainees have their marked copies to process the next morning. The format of working with the SET is described in Chapter 5. Overall, each reporter has to file 8 stories for full marking and assessment, and an unlimited number of stories for which they can point out the specific part they want to get advice on.

For the instructor this organisation of online training means that each day one story has to be fully marked and assessed, and from 2 to 3 stories evaluated or marked partially without assessment. The rest of the working day is spent on checking the fulfillment of the exercises and the quality of rewritten chunks of texts which are parts of the instructional modules in the SET, and on communication with the trainees. Trainees are required to respect their deadlines, but are allowed to put off filing for serious reasons, usually involving being on assignment out of Baku or being too busy. Usually, the relevant editor is approached to check this to avoid unsubstantiated reasons for not filing by deadline.

Editors are asked to take a supervisory role for their reporters' participation in the training and to monitor their progress. As the desk editors had graduated from one of the pilot projects, they understood the significance and the content of the training well and sometimes talked to the instructor on their own initiative or consulted on difficult issues. The editor-in-chief, however, did not participate in any online training, saying he was too busy. This poses a significant problem in the training because of the lack of deep understanding of the new standards that are taught and absence of combining efforts with the trainer. Instead, the editor accepts stories for publication despite their quality<sup>41</sup> often being poor.

#### *2.4.2. Instructional supervision and communication*

The trainees' conclusions on exercises, feedback and questions are automatically posted through the website to the instructor's email for checking. The instructor can immediately upgrade the instructional materials, exercises, answer questions or initiate correspondence via the forum if the fulfillment of exercises by the trainee shows that the instructions have not been correctly understood.

Another level of communication is a half-formal half-personal chat over various news writing issues which usually starts from some small personal item. Interaction is initiated by both sides: by the trainees, or, if needed, the instructor approaches the trainees suggesting a 'talk' on some specific issues of the training. The most popular mode of 'talking' was by using ICQ, or instant messaging system. When the other end was not online, emailing was used, and the training website also contained two ways of communicating: via forums or via the messages window. Skype was also tried as a communication means, but the quality of both its

---

<sup>41</sup> Even after the stylebook was prepared for the Agency by this researcher after series of talks about lack of style, and it was agreed with desk editors, and approved by the editor as guide for standards, editor did not demand that either journalists or copy-editors strictly followed the established rules

vision and hearing was so poor that this mode was put off until the technological breakthrough in Azerbaijan.<sup>42</sup>

#### *2.4.3. The duration of the experiment*

The length of the training is considered to be the “critical resource in the design and delivery of training. It, more than any other resource, determines whether or not the training is effective” (Shapiro, 1995, p. 295). Sufficient length of training is especially important if behavioural changes are expected (Cole, 2006). Cole notes that systematic approach is needed to explore various lengths of training programmes that may sustain behavioural change. She notes that in too many programmes a “rule-of-thumb” is used to define the length. Experience of this researcher who conducted eight 6-months training programmes in several post-USSR countries showed that the trainees made notable progress in the period from 4 to 6 months, but for some 6 months was not enough. The use of new training tools was believed to shorten this time, but initially no time frame was planned and the experiment was supposed to last until stable changes in writing skills were registered. However, the experiment lasted four months only. It started in early September 2008 and had to stop at the end of 2008 because the financial crisis which hit Azerbaijan undermined the Agency’s training budget.

#### *2.4.4. Explanation of the absence of a control group*

While in theory the use of a control group is a widely recognised method to provide a baseline to measure the experimental intervention against, and university-based researchers can arrange rather similar groups to test their hypotheses, the creation of a similar group of working journalists to match the experimental group was practically impossible. In theory, not only the educational, professional and cultural characteristics should be matched to make the comparison work, but also numerous other factors which might affect the result of the experiment, of which the major one is the similarity of the conditions in which the experiment takes place. But every media organisation has reporters of different experience and aptitude, and different social relations in the editorial office (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). In addition, online learning is an extremely complex domain because of the variety of elements involved in the instructional setting, which should include other issues, including social and economic (Saba, 2000). Joy & Garcia (2000) write that if the factors explaining the variance in the achievement of the learners are not strictly controlled, the differences between the experimental and control groups may not be detected. There are other factors that should be

---

<sup>42</sup> The country only recently started to lay its fibre-optic cables

taken into account when designing an experiment, including the learners' motivation which Hiltz (1994), Phipps & Merisotis (1999) consider important to measure the effect of educational programmes, learners' attitudes and opinions (Davis, et al., 1989). An option of creating a control group within the same Agency with most influential factors matching was not considered because many reporters have already undergone online training in the previous two pilot experiments and could not match the experimental group — which consisted of novice reporters — in their level of competencies.

Secondly, ethical reasons were considered. The main one was that the trainees in the control group would have to be deprived of what had already been demonstrated to be useful and effective in the pilot experiments at the Agency and in the previous decade of work of this researcher with other reporters in several post-USSR countries. Thirdly, there was no programme to be introduced in the control group to compare the results of training. I could have theoretically conducted online training without the use of the SET for the control group and provide them corrections and suggestions in writing, but I had already rejected such an option, which I have undertaken for six years before starting this research project. I explained this in the introduction: marking stories without the NTA and the SET is too laborious a job.

In addition, control groups are not common in action research design, largely for the reasons explained above.

Therefore, it was decided to conduct the experiment without a control group and instead of comparing changes that could have been expected to take place as a result of the experiment in a perfectly organised world, to monitor the progress of the reporters of the experimental group towards the planned outcomes of the training through the four months of the experiment and confirm the results by interviewing the trainees and observations during the training. In-depth interviews are considered to be a powerful tool to obtain more meaningful learner results when online learning is used rather than just assessing the outcomes (Sherry, Fulford, & Zhang, 1998; Smith & Dillon, 1999). Achieving an internationally accepted level of quality of news writing as the planned outcome of the experiment was considered to be more important and more significant for practitioners than proving statistically significant changes in the level of news writing as a result of training, or proving that the experimental group did statistically better than the control group.

The design of the experiment and the questionnaires to be used in this research were approved by the University of Canterbury's Human Ethics Committee in 2008. A consultant on this research, Alexander Chernyshenko, a Russian-speaking senior lecturer in the Psychology Department, was appointed a referee whose telephone number and email address were provided to the trainees as they signed the consent to participate in the experiment.

## Chapter 3.      **Designing the news texts assessment system**

### **Introduction**

In the previous chapters I laid the foundation for the online training of journalists in countries in transition to democracy. It was shown that despite apparent differences in journalism in such countries, news writing appears to be a category with more universal values than other genres of journalism. Therefore, this chapter will not discuss the advantages and disadvantages of different journalisms in emerging democracies (including advocacy or development types of journalism), but concentrate solely on news writing values and standards with the target of creating a practical system of online training in news writing which includes assessment of the quality of news stories, instruction tools, corrective feedback, and interaction between the trainees and the instructor. In the previous sections of this thesis various aspects of online training were also discussed and guidelines for the creation of new elements of online training — a scoring rubric and an online textbook — were prepared.

This analytical chapter is devoted to creating the rationale for the construction of the news text assessment system, or NTA. In this chapter the abbreviation NTA1 will be used to differentiate the NTA discussed here from the revised version developed in later chapters.

This chapter is more than an analysis of the literature on news writing, although the literature will be drawn on to discuss the importance of news writing and then to help create categories and criteria for the NTA. But the majority of the chapter's work — creating descriptors for the NTA and assigning them 5 quality levels of the rubric — uses the triangulation approach. It will combine insights from the literature with the experience of this researcher in online and face-to-face training of news reporters and will also use guidelines developed in the previous chapter (see 1.4.3.5) to underpin the allocation of various descriptions of the quality of writing into quality levels.

But before moving further into preparing the news texts assessment system, which lies at the core of the virtual textbook named in this thesis the scoring e-textbook, or SET, several complications and contradictions peculiar to news writing should be acknowledged that need to be taken into account both while creating the assessment and using it. Michael Schudson writes about these contradictions in the values of news writing in his seminal book *The power of news*, where he lists “seven impossible things” that news media purport to achieve (Schudson, 1995, p. 29). Three of these self-contradictory items have to do with news writing:

2. The media should provide coherent frameworks to help citizens comprehend the complex political universe. They should analyze and interpret politics in ways that enable citizens to understand and to act (In other words, the media should do exactly what the professional goal of objectivity swears they should not do: interpret the news)<sup>43</sup>

3. The media should serve as common carriers of the perspectives of the varied groups in society; they should be, in the words of Herbert Gans, “multiperspectival.” (In other words, the media should not provide an overarching coherence to the news, exactly the contrary of goal 2)

4. The news media should provide the quantity and quality of news that people want; that is, the market should be the criterion for the production of news. (In other words, the news media should adhere to the rule that many critics insist drives the press toward the sensational, the prurient, and the trivial) (Schudson, 1995, p. 28-29).

Schudson’s list of the “impossible things” suggests that assessing the quality of news writing is a complicated task performed in the ill-defined domain, and there should be no expectations that such assessment could be fully objective. The coders who will assess the quality of news stories using the NTA are very likely to exercise personal judgment and have a variety of approaches in the treatment of different elements of news stories even within the framework of professional standards and values. This greatly complicates one of the goals of this research — the creation of a rubric to assess the quality of news texts grounded in the realistic weightings of different elements. Therefore, to narrow the range of individual approaches that different coders might use to assess elements in news texts, and to make clear what exactly the coders see in the texts that they assess, it was decided that they should choose between a range of descriptions of various performances rather than holistically assign numerical grades to various qualities of performance. This chapter describes the process of creating these descriptors in each criterion chosen for the rubric.

The chapter has six sections. In the first section categories will be created which will form the parental basis of the NTA. In the following five sections five categories will be described, followed by the description of each criterion in each category, and sets of descriptors in each criterion.

### **3.1. Creating categories to assess the quality of news texts**

#### *Introduction*

To write news stories, journalists have to deal with a great number of elements. These elements can be taught and assessed, but first, a manageable classification of the elements must be created however vaguely these may be described in literature. Such classifications are

---

<sup>43</sup> Here and throughout, the emphasis is in the original text.

usually described as consisting of several levels of elements — from parental to lower level elements (Moskal, 2003; Nitko, 2004; Simon & Forgette-Giroux, 2001; Soled, 1995; Walsh & Betz, 1995; Wiggins, 1998). For example, performance assessment of a reporter may comprise writing ability, reporting ability, speed, productivity and efficiency, accuracy, work habits and judgment (Fink, 1996). Each of these categories includes several criteria. For instance, accuracy as a category is assessed by two criteria: 1 – skill with basic factual information such as names, addresses, dates and figures; 2 – ability to identify and make use of the best sources, whether they are documents, references or people (ibid). The logic of creating categories is to reduce the possibility of overlap of the lower order elements in different categories, or confusing criteria with categories. In this research the same logic was used to construct the system of assessment of the quality of news texts.

### *3.1.1. Categories as represented in books on journalism*

While a lot of studies have examined news values and elements that contribute to the quality of news stories, there is little research looking into the scientific underpinning of the higher order categories, in which these values and elements can be logically grouped. In this chapter these constructs were created instead from an analysis of the journalistic educational literature.

Chapters and sections in available journalism textbooks, books on journalism and books on news writing were analysed to identify the major constructs that news texts consist of. These constructs were to be used as parental categories in the NTA. The textbooks chosen for the analysis were selected on the grounds that they teach news writing as a whole. Therefore, books which elaborated only on a particular aspect of news journalism were excluded. There was no intention to analyse all the books written on news writing. Rather, the target was to analyse as many manuals as needed for the task without overly duplicating books with similar content. Sixteen available books were used, of which three books were written by British authors, one by a team of New Zealand authors, and the others were written by American journalism experts. Of the selected books only those names of chapters and sections were taken into account that were directly linked to writing news texts. Chapters dedicated to other issues, including developing skills of news reporting or to reporting on different beats, were not used because none of these issues can be directly identified in news texts and used for the assessment of their quality.

The names of the textbooks' chapters have been grouped in Table 5 according to their main content. Analysis of the names of the chapters shows that many textbooks have similar contents of chapters (or sections of chapters) on news writing. For example, most of the chapters which in the table are coded from 1.1 to 1.5 teach either classic elements of



newsworthiness (first outlined in Galtung & Ruge (1965)), or include variations of news values that the authors consider important. However, chapters with the same or similar content do not always have the same names, which complicates the job of creating a name for the category. For example, chapters and sections dedicated to language issues (from 2.1 to 2.20) have rather different names — from ‘Good English’ to ‘News style’ to just ‘Words’ despite them usually including the same items, the most popular of which are clarity, brevity and grammar. The biggest agreement between the authors is in the names of the chapters and sections in which intros and the structure of news reports are outlined. Most authors name the intro chapters straightforwardly ‘Intro’ and the structural parts ‘Structure’ or ‘Organising a news story’. Interestingly, not every textbook has a specific chapter on accuracy in news writing or even a specific chapter on accuracy. For example, in Scanlan (2000a) teaching material on accuracy is represented by an accuracy checklist in the section, “The reporter’s toolbox.”

**Table 5. Chapters in journalism textbooks**

<i>Names or main content of chapters</i>	<i>References to textbooks</i>
<b>Chapters on news values or newsworthiness</b>	
h1.1. News values	(Aitchison, 1988; Friend, Challenger, & McAdams, 2000; McGregor, 2002; Randall, 2000)
1.2. The nature of news (news values)	(Brooks, et al., 1988)
1.3. Criteria for newsworthiness (news values)	(Itule & Anderson, 1991)
1.4. What makes news (news values)	(McKane, 2006)
1.5. Qualities of news (news values)	(Rich, 2009)
<b>Chapters on the quality of language</b>	
2.1. Good English	(Evans, 1972)
2.2. Good writing	(Friend, et al., 2000; Itule & Anderson, 1991)
2.3. The mechanics of language	(Friend, et al., 2000)
2.4. The language of news	(McKane, 2006)
2.5. Grammar and usage	(Kershner, 2004)
2.6. Language	(Tully, 2008d)
2.7. News style	(Fox, 2001)
2.8. Standard or non-standard English	(Aitchison, 1988)
2.9. Prose style	(Aitchison, 1988)
2.10. Words	(Evans, 1972)

2.11. Watch this language	(Evans, 1972)
2.12. The importance of good writing (precision, clarity, pacing, transitions, sensory appeal, using analogies)	(Brooks, et al., 1988)
2.13. Making your writing likeable	(Lorenz & Vivian, 1996)
2.14. Building colour into news stories	(Lorenz & Vivian, 1996)
2.15. Using the language effectively	(Lorenz & Vivian, 1996)
2.16. The essence of good writing	(Russial, 2004)
2.17. Brevity	(Mencher, 1994)
2.18. Clarity	(Mencher, 1994)
2.19. Human interest	(Mencher, 1994)
2.20. Selectivity	(Mencher, 1994)
<b>Chapters on direct and reported speech</b>	
3.1. Incorporating other people's words	(Lorenz & Vivian, 1996)
3.2. The spoken word in print	(Fox, 2001)
3.3. Reported speech	(Aitchison, 1988)
3.4. Quote... unquote - direct speech	(Aitchison, 1988)
3.5. Quotes and attribution	(Brooks, et al., 1988), (Itule & Anderson, 1991), (Tully, 2008d)
3.6. Handling quotes	(Randall, 2000)
<b>Chapters on intro</b>	
4.1. Intro	(Fox, 2001; Itule & Anderson, 1991; Kershner, 2004; Lorenz & Vivian, 1996; McKane, 2006; Mencher, 1994; Randall, 2000; Rich, 2009; Scanlan, 2000a; Tully, 2008e)
<b>Chapters on structure</b>	
5.1. Organising a news story	(Fox, 2001; Itule & Anderson, 1991; Lorenz & Vivian, 1996; Randall, 2000; Rich, 2009)
5.2. Organisation: The shape of the story	(Friend, et al., 2000)
5.3. Structure	(Evans, 1972; Kershner, 2004; McKane, 2006; Russial, 2004; Tully, 2008e)
5.4. The inverted pyramid (intro, story organisation)	(Brooks, et al., 1988)
5.5. Other types of structure of news stories	(Brooks, et al., 1988; Mencher, 1994)
5.6. Story forms	(Scanlan, 2000a)
5.7. Finding the focus	(Rich, 2009)

<b>Chapters on accuracy</b>	
6.1. Accuracy and house style	(Evans, 1972)
6.2. Accuracy	(Friend, et al., 2000; McKane, 2006; Mencher, 1994)
6.3. Verification	(Mencher, 1994)
6.4. Attribution	(Mencher, 1994)
6.5. Mistakes, corrections and hoaxes	(Randall, 2000)
6.6. Reporting numbers and statistics	(Randall, 2000)
6.7. Numeracy and statistics	(Tully, 2008d)
6.8. Numbers in the news	(Friend, et al., 2000)
<b>Chapters on objectivity and related issues</b>	
7.1. Objectivity	(Mencher, 1994) (Tully, 2008d)
7.2. Balance and fairness	(Mencher, 1994)
7.3. Fairness and ethics	(Friend, et al., 2000)
7.4. Ethics (includes plagiarism, checkbook journalism, conflict of interest, deceit)	(Brooks, et al., 1988) (Itule & Anderson, 1991; Kershner, 2004; Randall, 2000; Rich, 2009; Tully, 2008e)
7.5. The morality of journalism	(Mencher, 1994)
<b>Contexts</b>	
8.1. Background	(Evans, 1972)
8.2. News in context	(Fox, 2001)
8.3. Nut grafts	(Rich, 2009)

As is discussed in more detail below, grouping of these items allowed the identification of several constructs:

- news values or newsworthiness (1.1 to 1.5)
- the quality of the language (2.1 to 2.20)
- direct and reported speech (3.1 to 3.6)
- intro (4.1)
- structure (5.1 to 5.7)
- accuracy and numbers (6.1 to 6.8)
- objectivity and related issues (7.1 to 7.5)
- contexts (8.1 to 8.3).

Of these 8 constructs only the first — news values — can be clearly singled out as a category in the NTA because it has its own specific content dealing with the criteria that make the news text newsworthy. There are two versions of the name for this category used by different authors — ‘News values’ and ‘Newsworthiness’. But while the understanding of newsworthiness is equally used and understood by academics and practitioners as a set of criteria including timeliness, importance, proximity, prominence and conflict (Galtung &

Ruge, 1965), the definition of news values is not necessarily consistent. For example, Fuller (1996) in his book *News Values* does not scrutinise criteria of newsworthiness, but writes about fundamental issues of journalism including the truth of the news, the rhetoric of news and the future of the newspaper industry, and therefore choosing ‘news values’ as a name for the category to assess the quality of news texts may be confusing. Therefore, the name ‘Newsworthiness’ has been chosen as the name of this category.

‘Newsworthiness’ is the only category of assessment of the quality of news texts that was borrowed directly from analysis of the literature. The other constructs that various authors use as names of chapters or sections are not mutually exclusive and some overlap. Two close constructs are the 2nd (‘Quality of language’) and the 3rd (‘Direct and reported speech’) because both have language as their basis. Most chapters that are devoted to the quality of language effectively reflect different aspects of news style and the mechanics of quotations, which are also based on language. In most books these aspects of news writing are concentrated in one chapter and sometimes a style guide is appended. Despite the variety of the names of these constructs, they all in one way or another represent the style of writing news. Therefore, they can form one category: ‘Style’, of which the use of language and the quality of quotations may serve as criteria. It could also be argued that language lies at the heart of any category of writing because people write with words. However, the ‘Style’ category must deal with the specifics of using the words,<sup>44</sup> while other categories can be based on specific factors that make them separate categories.

‘Intro’ and ‘structure’ are also mutually inclusive because the intro is clearly part of the structure of a news story. The intro is the first of the building blocks of a news report. The reasons that the intro (or ‘lead’ in American textbooks) has been singled out as an individual chapter — or sometimes even several chapters — is because of its significance to any news report. Therefore, these two elements were united in one category: ‘Structure.’

The next two constructs (‘Accuracy and numbers’) and (‘Objectivity and related issues’) deal with the fair representation of facts, their believability, trustworthiness and matching moral principles. They were collected within a category ‘Credibility and factual quality.’

The last construct deals with placing news in context to give it meaning. However, meaning is not only about the context, but may include other elements, such as explaining news. Therefore, the category dealing with giving meaning to facts formed the category ‘Meaning.’

### *Summary*

---

<sup>44</sup> See the discussion of the criteria in this category in Appendix 8

The NTA1 will consist of five categories: ‘Newsworthiness’, ‘Factual quality and credibility’, ‘Meaning’, ‘Style’, and ‘Structure.’

In the next five sections of this chapter each of these categories will be broken down into sets of criteria for the NTA1. It should be noted that the research did not set a target to create an exhaustive set of criteria, because it would be unwieldy and thus impractical. The target was to create a manageable set of about 5 or 6 criteria in each category by means of selecting the most important and popular criteria in the journalism literature. After the criteria were established, sets of descriptors were prepared to represent performances in each of them.

### **3.2. Newsworthiness**

The cornerstone of news writing is newsworthiness. This notion forms the heart of journalists’ “conventions” (Lippmann, 1991) or “shared operational values” (McGregor 2002, p. 115). These values are usually listed as a number of criteria. The criteria are supposed to be used by editors to make a choice from the influx of articles, not all of which can make their way into the newspaper’s pages, and to define the placement of news reports within the publication. Usually, the more newsworthiness criteria a news report includes, the more chance it has of being picked up by editors (Hall, Critcher, Jefferson, Clarke, & Roberts, 1978).

There are two major controversial points about the use of newsworthiness values. One concerns the values themselves, and another their usage in journalism practices.

The first problem is that there is no strictly defined set of newsworthiness values, or criteria. Sometimes they are presented in general, for example as “eye-catching and attention-grabbing” qualities (Niblock, 2005, p. 75), or as “sex, violence, the unusual and the sensational” as “ubiquitous news values”, at least in Western Europe and the USA (Manning, 2001, p. 61), or as a modest set of three elements — ‘relevance’, ‘revelation’, ‘arousal’ (Ward, 2002) or ‘timeliness’, ‘importance’, ‘interest’ (Scanlan, 2000a). Galtung and Ruge (1965) created a list of 12 newsworthiness criteria to explain the selection of foreign news for publication, acknowledging that some criteria overlapped. The list of the most important, distinctive and popular news values for the ‘Newsworthiness’ category of the NTA is presented in Table 27 .

Another controversial point is whether newsworthiness criteria are used in editorial practices and by journalists at all. For example, Lester (1980) refers to one example in which a clerk from a regional newspaper was routinely throwing out negative information — “fires, accidents, things like that” without any understanding of its newsworthiness (p. 990). “Neither she, nor anyone else ever supplied a more specific set of criteria for gauging

‘negativism’ (or any other news norm for that matter)” (p. 990). The author points out that the understanding of newsworthiness, even by advanced practitioners, is less refined than academics’ understanding of it. Times have not changed much in editorial offices. In a relatively recent publication in *The Scotsman* newspaper its ombudsman wrote:

News values are always worth a good argument. We have plenty of those arguments on a daily basis. Even in the industry, there is a kind of odd mystery which attaches to deciding news values, like it is akin to reading chicken bones or tarot cards (Stewart, 2009).

Confusing understanding of newsworthiness and its elements occurs because sometimes journalists look for some inherent news values in a news event instead of constructing their own news using professional news judgment:

Importance and interest are not endemic properties of occurrences, events or even completed stories. The rules governing newswork are not simply given and available, but actually constructed, interpreted and elaborated upon in the actual settings of newswork ... [G]enerating newsworthiness has a direct bearing on what appears or fails to appear in the newspaper (Lester, 1980, p. 993).

Overall, 52 different items that their authors consider newsworthiness values have been identified in the literature (see Table 27 in Appendix 4). The list is not exhaustive, however, it surely includes the most popular and widely used elements that make news stories newsworthy, while other elements overlap in different ways. Overlapping of newsworthiness criteria was acknowledged already by Galtung and Ruge (1965), who first classified newsworthiness values as criteria for selection of foreign news for publication. Data in Table 27 shows that the same, or nearly the same content could be detected in the following sets of elements (listings are followed by the identification of the core element in each set, highlighted in bold):

- importance, magnitude, impact as big numbers affected, importance, good news, threshold, secrecy: **all identify the scale and scope of news and indicate its importance**
- timeliness, recency, immediacy: **these elements show how close the occurrence and the publication times are**
- novelty, unexpectedness, newness, oddity, surprise, bizarreness, unusualness, unpredictability, weirdness, sensation: **these elements identify the level of ‘gee-whizzedness’ of the news**
- prominence, celebrity, the power elite, reference to elite nations and elite persons: **these elements point at the presence of something or someone famous or well-known**
- human interest, personification, entertainment, reference to persons: **elements that signify the emotional appeal of a story**
- conflict, bad news, disasters, negativity: **elements that are sometimes labelled ‘if it bleeds, it leads’**

- meaningfulness, relevance, proximity: **elements showing cultural or geographical closeness of news.**

### *Summary*

There is no agreement on the numbers and sets of elements that constitute newsworthiness. Fifty-two elements have been identified from the available literature. Some of them have the same content but different names, some the other way around. Newsworthiness elements are multifaceted and it is impossible to fit all the possible elements in the scoring rubric. Therefore, only the most typical and important descriptors were selected to represent newsworthiness.

Because it is possible to identify the core of each set of elements, one of the listed elements — which is typically or most frequently used in professional literature and practice to represent the group — was ‘appointed’ to represent the range of possible meanings: ‘importance’, ‘timeliness’, ‘unexpectedness’, ‘prominence’, ‘human interest’, ‘proximity’, and ‘conflict.’

Some of the 52 analysed elements were excluded because they cannot be observed in news texts and are rather criteria of the news selection process or reflect editorial policies of a media organisation. Such elements are community interest, continuity, currency, consonance, composition, follow-up and newspaper agenda.

A small group of criteria which some authors consider to be elements of newsworthiness do not naturally belong to this category. Such criteria are: accessibility, clarity, and impact — the first two more logically belong in the ‘Style’ category in which various aspects of language are dealt with, and impact, in the sense of the variety of consequences that news caused, is causing, will or may cause, is a logical element of the ‘Meaning’ category.

One criterion — unambiguity, that requires that news need no complex interpretations — has been excluded because being developed to judge newsworthiness of foreign news it cannot be directly applied to judge domestic news in which complex interpretations and sophisticated background is often needed to make sense for the local audience.

As a result of this analysis seven criteria were selected to represent newsworthiness as a category. They are: ‘timeliness’, ‘importance’, ‘proximity’, ‘prominence’, ‘unexpectedness’, ‘human interest’, and ‘conflict’. Each criterion is discussed in the next several sections with the target of creating sets of descriptors for each quality level of the scoring rubric (NTA1).

#### *3.2.1. Timeliness*

Timeliness is usually understood as a time lag between a news occurrence and the time of its publication (Brooker-Gross, 1981). Timely events are immediate, recent events (Folkerts, Lacy, & Larabee, 2008; Mencher, 1994), fresh stories (Berkowitz, 1997) or a new detail of a running story (Mott, 2006), or immediate-future happenings (Bridges & Bridges, 1997). However, when it comes to describing the content and placement of this aspect of news in news stories to formulate descriptors of observable performances in the NTA, timeliness can be seen to have a range of patterns which do not depend only on the type of news, but have substantial intra-class variability even within hard news. Examples in textbooks demonstrating observable patterns of conveying timeliness in news stories sometimes contradict each other even within the same textbooks (see examples below from Scanlan, 2000, and Keeble, 1994). Understanding of timeliness has also evolved with the development of telecommunications technology and in recent decades has become different for different media platforms. Finally, understanding of timeliness in hard news stories is being raised currently to the level of immediacy as conventional news media develop websites so as not to lose the battle to be the first with news to the electronic media. These points will be discussed in the following sections.

The ‘timeliness’ of a news story is a complicated feature. It is associated by different authors with ‘recency’ (Green, 2002; Scanlan, 2000a), ‘topicality’ (Keeble, 1994; Tully, 2008f), ‘frequency’ (Galtung & Ruge, 1965), ‘currency’ (Green, 2002; Tully, 2008a), ‘relevancy’ (Tully, 2008a), ‘contemporaneity’ (Keeble, 1994), ‘immediacy’ (Green, 2002; Tuggle, Huffman, & Rosengard, 2007) ‘freshness’ (Keeble, 2005) and ‘newness’ (DeFleur & Dennis, 2002; Keeble, 1994; Niblock, 2005). Masterton (1992) points out that to become news, information should be either new, or newly available, or it has not been made widely known before (Masterton, 1992a). To distinguish new information from the ‘newly available’ or ‘not widely known before’, the notion of a ‘news peg’ is also used. The range of understandings of what a ‘news peg’ is will be discussed below.

Clarifying and classifying various notions of timeliness, many of which overlap, is beyond the scope of this research. For example, ‘newness’, ‘freshness’, ‘recency’ and ‘immediacy’ do not seem to have differences in the observable pattern of their implementation in news stories, because they are simply pointing at the time when the news occur. However, ‘topicality’ overlaps with ‘currency’ in terms of relevance to current concerns (Green, 2002) — because it is an element of public concerns, in this research it is classed within the ‘importance’ criterion rather than ‘timeliness’. ‘Frequency’ has a range of interpretations from its original understandings as “time-span needed for the event to unfold itself and acquire meaning” by the time of the publication of the news story (Galtung & Ruge, 1965, p. 66) to “how close a story happens to the moment of publication” (Niblock, 2005). The latter understanding of



‘frequency’ is the same as ‘recency’ as a timely event. The original understanding of ‘frequency’ is not recommended as an element of timeliness in most textbooks and therefore will not be used for the construction of the scoring rubric.

One element that is rarely discussed in the literature is the presence and the specific location of the timeliness element in different types of news stories. It is generally agreed that timeliness should be made clear in the intro of breaking news stories, but its location in other types of news stories is rarely discussed. But as experience of this researcher shows, journalists often forget to mention the timeliness of events or occurrences they write about, and therefore it needs to be part of the assessment system and training material.

Therefore, three elements of timeliness will be used further to create the descriptors for the NTA scoring rubric: ‘recency’ as a timely event or occurrence in its understanding of the recent event or occurrence, ‘news peg’ as the time of a recent disclosure of what has not been known before, and the presence and placement of the answer to the ‘when?’ question.

Timeliness depends on the type of news: some types of news are more perishable than others (Brooker-Gross, 1981). News stories deliver not only straightforward news, but also cover concerns and trends (Friend, et al., 2000), topical issues (Gibbs & Warhover, 2002), stories about some future events and their implications (Friend, et al., 2000), provide analysis of something significant that has happened recently, report what has been uttered by some important person, give in-depth coverage of important news, or even tell about something that happened hundreds of years ago (Scanlan, 2000a). Several statements by different journalism textbook authors are further grouped in three classes that describe good, bad, and outstanding levels of quality in conveying timeliness in news stories.

‘Good’ level:

- A ‘timely’ news story contains a formal indication of the time when it occurred: whether it happened at a particular time of the day, at night, or at the height of rush hour. As well as recent events, what happened long ago and became known only recently may also become news, including archaeological finds, or discoveries of new facts, or explanations of something that took place some time ago (Scanlan, 2000a).
- Reporters typically make story selections based on the recency of the action. “Today” or “yesterday” are most usual references to timeliness in newspapers (Johnson-Cartee, 2005).
- Most leads in newspaper stories contain the word ‘today’ (Mencher, 1994).
- The more up to date the news is, the better. The ‘when’ element, such as ‘yesterday’, ‘last night’, ‘earlier today’, ‘earlier this week’ is crucial in many hard news intros (Keeble, 1994).
- Newspaper journalists need to cover the story in the next day or next week’s issue [for weekly newspapers] (Brooks, et al., 1988).

- For a daily newspaper timely are events which happened during the 24 hours since the last edition (Blake, n.d.).
- To make news timely, journalists of print publications need to find a more recent angle or make necessary updates (Adams, 1998; Brooks, et al., 1988; Granato, 1991; Keeble, 2005).

‘Outstanding’ level:

- Breaking news stories command space at most newspapers and air time at most radio and television outlets (Itule & Anderson, 1991).
- Of particular value are the stories brought to the public ahead of the competition, or ‘scoops’<sup>45</sup> (DeFleur & Dennis, 2002).

Exclusivity of news is a function of unexpectedness rather than of timeliness, and, therefore, it has not been included in the descriptor for the ‘outstanding’ level.

‘Unacceptable’ level:

- Because people want news to keep them up to date, they are interested in what happened today and not a week or a year ago (Lorenz & Vivian, 1996).

Analysis of these statements allows us to formulate the following descriptors for the NTA1:

‘**outstanding**’: news is breaking and it is clear from the story

‘**good**’: a time cue is provided which indicates that news is no older than 24 hours from the previous deadline for daily newspapers; or no older than ‘today’ for digital media

‘**unacceptable**’: news is older than 24 hours from the previous deadline for daily newspapers; or older than ‘today’ for digital news resources.

### **Timeliness in hard news (spot, planned, unplanned, developing, news on revelations)**

The ways of communicating timeliness in these types of news is mostly similar in different textbooks and timeliness in most examples is conveyed as the day (and, sometimes, time) when news occurs — the name of a weekday, or indications including ‘today’, ‘yesterday’, ‘last night’, or time of the day, when relevant.

For instance (timeliness italicised):

- A medical team flew to Texas *Friday* to fetch a donor heart to replace the Jarvik 7 mechanical organ that has kept a young Arizona man alive for more than a week (Itule & Anderson, 1991).
- Mr Anthony Wedgwood Benn *yesterday* made an unprecedented attack on a major United States corporation for trying to get British nuclear technology on the cheap (Evans, 1972, p. 124).
- An Air Force bomber on a routine training mission crashed *Wednesday* in a rural section of western Kentucky and exploded. All four crew members survived (Scanlan, 2000, p. 155).

---

<sup>45</sup> Exclusive stories

However, journalism textbooks often have different expectations for different kinds of story. Stories on immediate future occurrences also clearly specify the timeliness of the newsworthy event rather than the time of its revelation. In the following example the phrase, ‘until at least tomorrow’, signifies timeliness, while when the weather officials delivered the news is not even mentioned:

- Tri-State roads called “hazardous at best” by the national Weather Service won’t improve *until at least tomorrow* when sunny skies, temperatures new freezing and drying winds should help road clearing work. Police throughout the Tri-State urged residents to stay home as drifting snow closed roads throughout the Evansville area. Some could remain closed for days, weather officials said (Itule & Anderson, 1991).

In contrast, stories based on revelations, as the following examples show, have the time of their revelation as the marker of the timeliness of the news and timeliness is given in the first or second paragraph:

- Working families with mortgages and the struggling self-employed are the “new poor” to emerge from a select committee report on poverty during the Thatcher years. The report, *Low Income Statistics: Low Income Families 1979-1989*, published by the Social Security Committee *yesterday*, shows a striking new trend in the type of people classified as living below the poverty line (Keeble, 1994, p. 178).
- As many as 98,000 Americans die unnecessarily every year from medical mistakes made by physicians, pharmacists and other health care professionals, according to an independent report released *yesterday* that calls for a major overhaul of how the nation addresses medical errors. More Americans die from medical mistakes than from breast cancer, highway accidents or AIDS, according to the report from the Institute of Medicine, an arm of the National Academy of Sciences (Fox, 2001).

However, there is difference in the understanding of what the answer to the ‘when’ question means. For example, Keeble (1994) — experienced editor, university lecturer and author of a textbook on copy-editing — gives an example of an intro for a spot news story, in which, as he specifies further, ‘timeliness’ as the answer to the ‘when’ question is given in the phrase ‘while he was on work experience at a leisure centre’:

A 15-year-old schoolboy drowned in a swimming pool *while he was on work experience at a leisure centre* (Keeble, 1994, p. 109, emphasis added).

But when did the boy drown? Yesterday? Last week? Last month? Most textbook authors point to the indication of the specific date or time as the answer to the ‘when’ question. For instance, a similar example by Scanlan (2000a) gives the latter understanding of the notion of timeliness of an accident — as the time when it happened and not ‘when he was shot by a friend’:

A 16-year old St. Petersburg boy was killed *Sunday afternoon* when he was shot by a friend playing with a shotgun, police said (Scanlan, 2000a, emphasis added).

However, in the same textbook Scanlan gives an example of a spot news intro written by the *Associated Press*, which does not have the timeliness element. Surprisingly, Scanlan gives no

explanations of why it is omitted despite the example being in the section of the textbook specifically dedicated to “mastering the five W’s and an H and SW”<sup>46</sup> (p. 116):

Heavily armed gunmen ambushed a payroll delivery and got away with \$50,000 after spraying a quiet street with bullets, critically wounding a moonlighting off-duty detective and a retired police officer (Scanlan, 2000a).

The original story apparently had the timeliness element, but not in the intro. In the story, retrieved from the Factiva database (see Appendix 9), it is placed in the second paragraph:

The robbers, believed to have been armed with assault rifles, pumped bullets into the men Friday even as they lay wounded on the ground.

Interestingly enough, several other examples of intros, written on the same subject, have the formal indication of timeliness in the intro. As this example is given in a textbook, and especially in the section specifically written to instruct on the usage of the basic 5 W’s and H in news stories, journalism students apparently need to get explicit explanation of why the timeliness element was not used in the intro and how typical such usage is.

Several examples, given in Keeble (1994) also miss out the timeliness element, and not only in the intro. Timeliness is nowhere to be found in the text, which must also confuse the textbook users. For instance:

A man who was seen crawling on all fours before getting into a car has been jailed for the “safety of the public”.

Ludford magistrates jailed Vernon Duckson, 43, for three months, saying no other sentence was suitable for a man who was so heavily over the limit, and banned him for five years (Keeble, 1994, p. 238).

This story, published in an evening provincial newspaper and reprinted in the textbook’s section, “Covering the courts”, does not have any indication of its timeliness in the text.

However, the author considered it a high quality story saying: “I liked this report” and that the reporter did his “best” (ibid, p. 238). An example in another story given as an example in the “Covering speeches” section, also omits any indication of ‘timeliness’:

Lady Thatcher has delivered a savage attack on the West’s “paralysis” over the Yugoslav civil war. In a speech which will engage Downing Street she virtually called for armed force to impose peace on the warring factions bringing strife to Bosnia (Keeble, 1994, p. 191).

In both cases Keeble gave no explanations for the absence of what is traditionally understood as timeliness. Interestingly, in many other examples in the same textbook by Keeble, timeliness indicators are given (mostly as ‘today’ or ‘yesterday’, or refer to a weekday). Such inconsistency may mean that the author did not take this element seriously. But does it mean that Keeble’s understanding of the answer to the ‘when’ question and absence of timeliness

---

<sup>46</sup> SW stands for ‘So what?’

from many of his examples could help to formulate descriptors for the NTA? As most other authors of textbooks call for timeliness of hard news stories to be stated in the first or second paragraphs, clarifying when the occurrence took place or when it was revealed, the descriptors were formulated the following way:

**‘good’**: in a hard news story timeliness is specified in the first or the second paragraph

**‘acceptable’**: in a hard news story the time of the news is mentioned lower than in the second paragraph

**‘unacceptable’**: the ‘when’ question was not addressed where necessary

### **Timeliness in pseudo-news and a ‘news peg’**

The news peg differs from the timeliness of an event or occurrence. While timeliness is a time or a date when genuine news occurred, a news peg is a device used in news stories that helps make events or occurrences look timely by conveying the time or date of when something non-newsworthy happened or, by capitalising on something newsworthy, brings up soft news or insufficiently timely or even untimely issues (Gans, 1980; Kitzinger & Skidmore, 1995). News pegs are used in three main formats which are usually labelled ‘pseudo-news’ (Boorstin, 1987) or ‘pseudo-events’ (Randall, 2000). Pseudo-news in its classic understanding is a promotional-type event primarily staged to be covered by the media. Such news reports are widely published because they are advertised and organised for their easy coverage (Boorstin, 1987). This format may also include what “some politician or celebrity, driven as a rule by their own motives the main of which is advertising, decided to announce” (Randall, 1996, p. 41). Such stories are considered to be of the lowest level of newsworthiness (Randall, 1996) unless reporters find a newsworthy subject at a news conference or other pre-organised event to report about (Keeble, 1994; Scanlan, 2000a), or if a newsmaker says something entirely unexpected:

Just because some middle-aged man in a grey suit has chosen to make a speech or a statement does not make it news. Most speeches and statements are expressions of the entirely expected. It is only when they say something surprising that it becomes news. A leading reformist, liberal political condemning the slow pace of change in a society is nothing new. But if he announces his conversion to communism, then this is news (Randall, 2000, p. 29).

Situations in which politicians utter their statements publicly (at a press-conference or alike), Randall (2000) labels ‘pseudo-event.’ He knows well the situation in post-authoritarian countries,<sup>47</sup> where scores of press-conferences are organised daily and journalists rush from

---

<sup>47</sup> In 1994-1995 David Randall, author, former assistant editor of *The Observer* and journalism trainer, reorganised the editorial department of the *Moscow Times* of Russia and provided training for its journalists. Later he provided training to journalists of the Russian-

one to another. He wrote: “In one of the issues of *The Moscow Times* (otherwise a superior English-language publication), 9 out of 13 news reports belonged to the ‘pseudo-events’ type of news” (Randall, 1996, p. 40). Trying to convince reporters that they must look for genuine news, he wrote in his book:

Press-conferences are not, as some journalists seem to think, news in themselves. Nothing has actually happened. The world has not been changed one bit. All that has happened is that some politician or celebrity has wanted to make a statement (Randall, 1996, p. 41).

Development news (M. Masterton, 1995) may constitute the third type of pseudo-news or pseudo-events because stories on these typically promote developments in the country and its institutions and systems while work is still in progress and nothing has been accomplished. All three types of pseudo-news are widely used in transitional and developing countries, where authorities are desperate to promote their own achievements, whether or not they can be so called. Berkowitz (1997) suggests that the timeliness of pseudo-news should be judged by whether a story could or could not be arranged to happen on another day. If the answer is ‘yes’, then timeliness cannot be considered to be of a ‘good’ quality. However, it is not ‘inappropriate’ either because in the latter case the story would not be timely at all. Therefore, the time peg in the ‘pseudo-news’ stories was allocated in the ‘appropriate’ level of quality. The distinction between timeliness and the news peg is important for the instruction of novice reporters, who often do not have enough experience and knowledge to immediately grasp the newsworthiness of the event or an occurrence. Therefore, the descriptor that takes into account pseudo-news can be formulated the following way:

‘**acceptable**’: a pseudo-news story could have been easily published on another day

### **Timeliness in current and explanatory news**

This research cannot examine exhaustively the broad range of possible story formats and concentrates on assessing and training in relation to hard news reporting. However other formats are often used by news reporters and therefore timeliness issues in these formats will be briefly looked into.

News stories dealing with important topics are timely. What people are concerned with and talking about deserves looking into (Gibbs & Warhover, 2002). But for such stories timeliness as a newsworthiness criteria is secondary; they simply should be reported as soon as possible (Brooks, et al., 1988). Important news may be written a day or two after the occurrence, addressing the issue that caused it (Friend, et al., 2000). Stories which have more

---

language *Kapital* business newspaper. In 1996 he published the *Universal Journalist* in Russian.

explanatory character, must explain in the third or the fourth paragraph why the reader is reading the story now (Watts, 1998).

Examples in textbooks show that timeliness in current news can be conveyed by several methods in addition to the methods already mentioned above:

- by implying some future problem: (Scanlan, 2000a; Tucker, 2008). An example:  
The University of Oregon must move more women into higher-level faculty jobs or face federal sanctions (Tucker, 2008)
- by using the present tense of the main verb to indicate that the news is happening ‘currently’ or it is ongoing (Itule & Anderson, 1991; Keeble, 1994; Scanlan, 2000a). An example:  
A gang of thieves armed only with a master key *is plundering* one of the country’s biggest bookstore chains (Tucker, 2008).

However, the disagreement, discussed above, about whether the answer to the ‘when’ question always conveys timeliness, is relevant to current news as well. In his textbook Keeble (1994) again sees timeliness as the answer to the ‘when’ question in “when they visit the lavatories”:

Prisoners *are being routinely handcuffed and chained* **when they visit the lavatories** at one of London’s busiest crown courts because security is so inadequate (Keeble, 1994, p. 110, italics - my emphasis, bold - the author's understanding).

However, the timeliness in this example is rather conveyed by expressing the ‘todayness’ of the inappropriate treatment through use of the present continuous tense: “are being routinely handcuffed and chained”. This expression communicates to the reader that mistreatment is still going on.

Timeliness in news features may be conveyed by the same means as in other types of hard news, but more inventive and colourful ways may also be used including anecdotal intros. For example:

Miro had more reasons than most to wake up with a splitting headache *on New Year’s Day*.

The creek which divides his ramshackle farmhouse from his hectare of land became part of the world’s newest international border *as the bells rang in 1993*, leaving his property dissected by the disintegration of Czechoslovakia (Keeble, 1994, p. 251, emphasis added).

Provided this news feature was published close to New Year’s Day, the two indicators — “on New Year’s Day” and “as the bells rang in 1993” would sufficiently deliver the timeliness of the story.

The descriptors for such stories may be therefore formulated the following way:

‘**good**’: in current and explanatory news, timeliness is given in the first four paragraphs of the story

**‘acceptable’**: current and explanatory news has a news peg

**‘inappropriate’**: current and explanatory news has no indication of time; or no news peg

### **Timeliness in electronic media**

Analysis of various interpretations and formal indications of timeliness given above show that while for daily newspapers timely is ‘yesterday’ and sometimes ‘today’ (Granato, 1991; Johnson-Cartee, 2005; Mencher, 1994), for weekly ‘last week’ or pointing at the weekday when the news occurred (Adams, 1998; Keeble, 1994; Niblock, 2005), for electronic media timely means as close as possible to the deadline (Blake, n.d.; Tuggle, et al., 2007), even ‘live’ and ‘immediately’ for television channels (Miller & Hatley-Major, 2005).

The content of what are ‘acceptable’, ‘inappropriate’ and ‘unacceptable’ levels of timeliness in news stories has been discussed above. But what level of recency could be assessed as the ‘outstanding’ level of timeliness of a story? Logically, broadcasting ‘live’ or ‘immediately’ should be the ‘outstanding’ level for television channels, radio and online resources. But what about news stories in newspapers? Does the definition of ‘breaking’ news — items that “command space at most newspapers and air time at most radio and television outlets” (Itule & Anderson, 1991, p. 41) because of their timely nature — still work in the digital age? How fast should news appear in online media to be assessed as ‘outstanding’ for its timeliness?

‘Breaking’ news has been traditionally described as non-routine or unplanned news events that are covered in the course of a media’s news cycle (Tuchman, 1973). This description considers the immediacy of news as a substantial component, while daily newspapers’ cycle of 24 hours was considered sufficient to break news. The notion also precludes that planned news cannot be ‘breaking’. But the most important point for this research is that this definition does not allow us to distinguish the ‘good’, level of quality in the ‘timeliness’ criterion from the ‘outstanding’, because ‘breaking’ news in Tuchman’s (1973) understanding is subject to both levels. The fact that the nature of news is included in this definition changes little regarding the ‘timeliness’ part of this type of news. The verb ‘to break’ is primarily a function of time and not of the content.

But time — 40 years have passed since this definition was coined — is returning the priority to the ‘timeliness’ function of the ‘breaking’ news definition. Development of communication technologies, including mobile and satellite phones and the Internet, are changing the practice of understanding of what breaking news is, and even changing news values (O’Neill & Harcup, 2008). Some authors say that in the digital age the ‘just happened’ definition of news is no longer so relevant for daily newspapers (Buttry, 2005; Scanlan, 2000a). Scanlan quotes Geneva Overholser, a renowned journalism expert and ex-ombudsman of the *Washington Post*, as saying, that, in the modern world of electronic media, newspapers have “ceased to be



the way people actually discovered something” (Scanlan, 2000a, p. 8). Modern technologies now allow television, radio and online news outlets to broadcast many events as they unfold. Print newspapers have been left much behind in terms of presenting immediate news to the public (McNair, 1998). The definition of ‘breaking news’ seems to have faded as a category in print media, which have largely lost such stories to electronic media (Bridges & Bridges, 1997; Miller & Hatley-Major, 2005; Tuggle, et al., 2007). There is a need to redefine it.

Miller & Hatley-Major (2005) in their study of television practitioners’ choices for breaking news stories, suggested a new definition of breaking news for television channels. The definition not only stresses the element of immediacy to the point of transmitting live visuals, but also changes the content of what used to be unexpected and unplanned hard news:

Breaking television news is planned and unplanned, hard and soft news that crosses a newsworthiness threshold based on new content and/or live visuals. Breaking news 1) is reported immediately, 2) contains new information (expected or unexpected), 3) is most often market-based (chosen to increase ratings) (Miller & Hatley-Major, 2005, p. 21).

This definition means that on television breaking news has to be timely, but does “not have to be surprising, or even relevant” (ibid, p. 22). This situation became even more complicated in recent years when another serious competitor to the traditional news media emerged and challenged even television news. Twitter and other social Internet resources have become the fastest disseminators of new information (Kopytoff, 2009; Schlesinger, 2009). David Schlesinger, editor-in-chief of Reuters, wrote in his blog that he defeated his own correspondent in breaking news outside of Davos:

I myself tweeted real-time updates from a lunch with George Soros and beat my own correspondent resoundingly in getting news from the lunch out to the world. My new media work beat his efforts which followed our traditional Reuters standards of sending items to an editor before transmission (Schlesinger, 2009).

In the 45 minutes that he ate his lunch and listened to Soros, Schlesinger, according to his Twitter blog, sent 13 short messages on the topics addressed by Soros, each up to 140 characters (Appendix 5).

Breaking news has apparently changed in meaning from being unplanned and non-routine to being news delivered in a timely fashion. This means that print newspapers are left behind in breaking news stories (Tuggle, et al., 2007) and perhaps should be excluded from the range of media that can break news at the time when they occur or immediately after.

However, most modern newspapers have websites where news alerts from one line to two paragraphs in length can be posted nearly immediately after news has occurred in the same manner as news agencies do it. For example:

Harmony says 3,200 S.African gold miners trapped

JOHANNESBURG, Oct 3 (Reuters) - Harmony Gold, the world's fifth biggest gold producer, said on Wednesday 3,200 miners were trapped underground at one of its mines in South Africa.

Harmony spokeswoman Amelia Soares said the workers at the Elandsrand mine in South Africa's Mpumalanga province were trapped after an electrical cable of a lift carrying workers to the surface snapped at around

0800 GMT on Wednesday (Reuters, 2007).

There are no recommendations, however, in the available literature on what time gap between the news occurrence and the publication could be considered 'immediate'. However, the recommendation by (Blake, n.d.) that 30 minutes is 'timely' for television channels, could serve as an indicator of how fast news should be broken by television rivals to beat each other. Perhaps 'less than 30 minutes' after the news occurrence could suffice as the indicator of timeliness for breaking news or the news alerts.

Another matter to reconsider in the definition of breaking news by Tuchman (1973) is their content. The content of the news in the definition — non-routine or unplanned — touches on the substance of another news value — unexpectedness. In the NTA1, this element is assessed separately. Therefore, it is perhaps more expedient to define (and assess) 'timeliness' for its own value without having the criteria overlap. However, the understanding of the genuineness of news should be included to exclude news from pseudo-events, which are popular in transitional countries. Thus the definition of breaking news for newspapers and online resources could read as follows:

breaking news for newspapers and online media is an alert about genuine occurrence, incident or utterance, which is posted within 30 minutes of it occurring.

Based on this analysis, the descriptions for the NTA1 can be formulated in the following way:

**'outstanding'**: news alert about a genuine occurrence, incident or utterance is posted within 30 minutes of it occurring.

See Appendix 3 for descriptors for this and other criteria analysed in this chapter.

### 3.2.2. *Importance*

Understanding of importance of a news story varies greatly in the journalistic literature and it complicates the task of this research to create explicit and shared values for criteria used for assessment. For instance, Scanlan (2000) states that it is a complex criterion that includes explanation of news, relevance to readers, well-known personalities and answers to the questions 'so what' and 'why should I care' (p. 8). Parks (2006) adds a similar question 'what does it mean' to this list. Because Scanlan considers only three elements of newsworthiness — timeliness, importance, and interest — his understanding of importance is apparently compound and thus needs to be broken up into smaller parts to be used for assessment or instructional purposes. It is much easier to deal with the descriptions of what constitutes

importance in news stories when the importance is separated from various other newsworthiness criteria.

Another difficulty which complicates the formulation of descriptors based on observable patterns in news texts is absence of such patterns in some texts. Some authors refer to a rather implicit understanding of importance which is also hard to use for assessment or instruction. For example Palmer (2000) writes that the event must pass a certain size threshold to qualify for sufficient importance to be newsworthy.

A third complication is that some authors equate importance to impact (see examples of such overlapping in the table in section 3.1.2), and there is also disagreement on the placement of the 'importance' element in the story. For instance, Rich (2009, p. 41) writes "[s]ometimes the impact is explained in the lead or in the nut graph; sometimes it is lower in the story, in an explanatory paragraph." She appears to have confused the importance and impact criteria. Later in this section these criteria will be defined and their placement discussed.

The major point of complication is, however, whether agreement on what is important can be reached at all. "What is significant will always be a matter of debate," wrote Fuller (1996, p. 7) pointing out that evaluating the importance of news is not a straightforward exercise. This means that reporters should not only give facts and let the audience decide on their importance, but they should also give an outline of why news is important, because in a world of snowballing information the audience has little chance to have sufficient knowledge to understand the importance of news.

There are three issues by which different authors define what they label importance – impact, magnitude, consequence or significance of news. They are the measure of those who will be affected, the measure of the impact on those affected, and the combination of both. For instance, Lorenz & Vivian (1996) typify the criterion that they label 'consequence' as the magnitude of the impact: "the greater an event's effect on people, the more likely it will be reported" (p. 25). At the other end Masterton (1991), also calling the criterion 'consequence', includes in the notion the magnitude of the impact, how people will be affected and when. He points out that 'consequence' covers similar criteria with names such as 'impact', 'significance', 'effect' and 'eventual effect', and covers all types of effect including physical, financial, economic, and political.

To avoid multifaceted criteria, which are difficult to use in assessment for instructional purposes, in this research the notion of 'importance' was used in two senses. Firstly, to define the magnitude of the news by the numbers of people who were, are, will be, or may be affected: importance of news will depend on whether it touches a large number of people, corresponding to the understanding of several authors (Bridges & Bridges, 1997; Harcup &

O'Neill, 2001; Mencher, 1994; Molotch & Lester, 1974; Randall, 2000). This first meaning may be labelled as 'direct importance'. Direct importance is a feature of news that sometimes does not even need to be explained to be understood as important. For instance, any reader is able to understand the significance of a postal workers' strike, because many will be affected by the delays in the mail delivery (Mencher, 1994), and many readers will immediately compute by themselves what price hikes mean for their budgets (Burns, 2002). Rich (2009) specifies that some human interest stories need no specific explanation of their importance, and some news reports are published just because they carry a clear message: 'it can happen to anyone and you, too'.

However, Rich writes, if a story cannot "show direct impact on readers", it should have a "clear paragraph explaining the reason for the story" (2009, p. 41). This is the second meaning of 'importance' as a criterion: reporters should explain the story's importance as the reason for its publication so that people can immediately understand it. The second meaning may be labelled 'indirect importance'. Indirectly important news may not be understood as important from its content, and it needs a special paragraph to explain its importance. The paragraph that explains importance of news in a nutshell high up in a news story tells them why should they care, or why the story matters, or what it means, is often also labelled a 'so what' paragraph (Scanlan, 2000), or a 'perspective' paragraph (Baker, 2002), 'consequence' element of news (Lorenz & Vivian, 1996), or 'what it means' line (Parks, 2006).

The content of the criterion 'impact' in this research (see section 3.4.3) will contain elaboration of the magnitude and variety of the impact of news on various stakeholders including those who are directly affected — people, organisations, and society. The difference in content between the 'importance' and the 'impact' criteria is in two issues. Firstly, while 'importance' as the potential to affect great numbers of people is a basic criterion of selecting news for the publication and also serves as a tool to concisely convey the significance of the story in its beginning so that people can make a choice whether or not to carry on reading, the story may or may not include quality explanations of the impact of news on the lives, society, and stakeholders in news. Secondly, while 'importance' is usually given in a nutshell graf high up in the story, 'impact' is usually lowered to after the 4W's and H and importance of the news story are covered.

To be able to formulate descriptors for the NTA's 'importance' criterion, several examples were analysed further. Baker (2002), who names the paragraph that is supposed to explain importance of the story and give it focus the 'perspective' paragraph. Several examples of the use of this paragraph are offered. They show why a story which does not have explicit direct impact on news consumers was published. In an example on p. 41 Baker asks what is wrong with the following story, implying that the 'perspective paragraph' is missing:

The man who became the first person to legally receive laetrile imports in California is dead just short of his 75th birthday — a victim of the cancer he hoped the drug could halt.

Ray Carnohan of Pacific Beach died of cancer of the pancreas late Saturday, three weeks after winning permission from a federal judge to bring the controversial apricot extract into the United States from Mexico.

He is believed to be the first Californian to have been granted permission to import the substance.

Carnohan, a furniture dealer, had told newsmen...

The chunk of information “that the reporter knew very well, yet didn’t put in the story” was the ‘perspective’ paragraph that the author writes should have followed the second paragraph:

Laetrile is banned by the federal Food and Drug Administration as ineffective in cancer treatment.

Indeed, a story without the ‘perspective’ paragraph raises the suspicion that he died because of the fault of the authorities who did not allow him to import a valuable medicine that may have cured him and that when he was issued permission, it was too late. Adding the ‘perspective’ paragraph makes clear that the blame is not with the authorities. The medicine was useless anyway.

Baker gives another similar example in which the importance of the story is concisely and clearly formulated, this time inserting the needed paragraph in the text (p. 45, ‘perspective’ graph underlined in original):

An influential Parliament committee Tuesday called on Britain’s Labour government to make drastic cuts in immigration and tighten control of immigrants once they enter Britain.

The report, written by the House of Commons Select Committee on Race Relations, brought immediate protests from white liberals and immigrant groups.

*It seemed certain to fuel a growing political controversy over non-white immigration, which has stirred increased racial tension in this country.*

The committee said Britain must not continue to allow the high level of non-white immigration of recent years.

Parks gives an even better idea of the significance of what he calls the ‘what it means’ line as he uses it after a made-up unintelligible intro (p. 94-95, emphasis added):

The City Council on Tuesday rescinded an ordinance requiring soft-serve ice cream vendors to submit to monthly inspections and lowered the sales tax on frozen treats to 3 percent. Councilman I.C. Creme, who sponsored the proposal, said the changes would reduce unnecessary regulations and help entrepreneurs stay in business.

Opponents said the tax break unfairly advantages one type of business and the reduced inspections could create a health threat.

WHAT IT MEANS: *A double-dip chocolate cone will cost less next summer, but it might make you sick.*

Other authors give similar examples. Lorenz & Vivian (1996) give an example of an intro with the importance woven in (p. 25, emphasis added):

*Law enforcement and medical services may suffer throughout Wisconsin if the number of military reservists called for active duty increases, officials say.*

Rich (2009) recommends to lead on how news affects people whenever possible. She gives the following intro as an example (p. 62, emphasis added):

*Anchorage residents will (sic) able to breathe air that's a little cleaner this weekend. A new, tougher version of the citywide smoking ban goes into effect July 1.*

Baker humorously describes how it is frequent for a paragraph summarising the story's importance that puts the story in focus to be left out:

The night is dark and the moon is yellow and the leaves come tumbling down and a thousand dead editors break the silence, thrashing with frustration in their graves, still recalling all those otherwise bright reporters who never got the hang of that corny old command, "Tell the reader what it means." (Baker, 2002, p. 41)

However, there is some discrepancy in Baker's understanding of what the content of the 'perspective' paragraph should be. Compare the third graph of the first example with the third example from Baker's textbook ('perspective' graph highlighted in original):

The administration Tuesday announced its long-expected decision to sell 50 fighter-bombers to Egypt in a Mideast package that includes some of the most sophisticated warplanes in the US arsenal for Saudi Arabia and a sharply reduced supply of planes for Israel

*It will be the first sale of US warplanes to Egypt* (Baker, 2001, p. 45).

A similar type of paragraph (despite it being used as the ending) was used by Evans (1972) in his example of a story written about how an American military policeman threw a tear-gas grenade to rescue an East German refugee from the East German guards who tried to pull him back when he climbed the Berlin Wall to flee to West Berlin:

It was the longest battle since the Wall went up and the most serious in that it was the first time a US soldier had gone into action to save a refugee (p. 113).

Evans labelled this paragraph 'assessment'.

It is noteworthy that in the example given in the story about Laetrile the same type of paragraph that stated the uniqueness of the situation ('He is believed to be the first Californian') has not been typified as the perspective paragraph. This means that uniqueness of the situation which is often used in practice of news reporting to highlight the rarity or unusualness of news could be considered a separate element which may or may not serve as a tool to specify the importance of a news story. No definitions of either importance, or significance, or impact, or other similar notions, include uniqueness or similar elements as one of their facets. More than that, several statements in the table in section 3.1.2 are very close in meaning to uniqueness but have little to do with the story's importance:

- ‘unexpectedness’: unexpectedness as opposed to everyday occurrence (“man bites dog”) (Galtung & Ruge, 1965)
- ‘bizarre’: odd or peculiar events are more newsworthy than those of a routine nature (DeFleur & Dennis, 2002)
- ‘unusualness’: events that deviate sharply from the expected and the experiences of everyday life (Mencher, 1994)
- ‘weirdness’: involving something unusual or strange (Blake)
- an action or event that is rarer than just the unusual (Bridges & Bridges, 1997)
- ‘novelty’: means that people like to know about things which are unusual or different (synonyms: rarity, oddity) (Masterton, 1994).

Therefore, ‘uniqueness’ in this research will not be used as an element of ‘importance’, but will belong to the ‘unexpectedness’ criterion.

Another point of discussion in this section needs to be the credibility of conveying importance in news stories in a format that could be seen by outsiders as reporters’ opinions. Journalism conventions require using no reporters’ opinions in news stories, but formulas used to express importance of news stories in this section are likely to be perceived by some as judgmental. But, Parks (2006) points out, “bluntly calling a situation as you see it shouldn’t decrease your credibility; it should bolster the authenticity of your work” (p. 95). The short paragraph that explains implicit importance of news stories close to the intro does not necessarily have to be professional judgment by news reporters based on their knowledge and understanding of the situation. If the story is indeed important, the formulation of importance in the top of the story could be extracted from deeper explanations of the impact of news which is usually provided in the texts after the 4W’s and H of the news report have been covered.

The last but not the least point of discussion is the need to clearly distinguish the importance of news stories from their interest to the audience. Apparently, news that can affect millions of people is not necessarily news that can be of immediate interest to them. Fulfilling their role as gatekeepers, news organisations should deliver some “extremely important” news stories to readers “whether or not they are interested in them”, writes Fuller (1996, p. 7). As an example he gives strategic arms limitation talks: “the enormous importance of these negotiations to the future of the planet makes them extremely newsworthy” (ibid). A direct connection of news to a particular globally important subject that can affect life on the planet, can mean that extremely important stories of this type should be allocated to the ‘outstanding’ level of quality in ‘importance’ as a criterion of assessment. However, the subject of news can hardly serve as a basis for creation of the descriptors for the other levels of performance.

To formulate the descriptors for the NTA1 four main elements of importance as a criterion were considered:

- Global importance of news as it affects or can affect life on the planet, which, may be reduced to national or local levels for local news organisations descriptors in this criterion.
- Direct importance of news that does not need to be explained.
- Implicit importance of news that needs to be explained.
- The placement of ‘importance’ as a criterion.

### 3.2.3. *Proximity*

It is a commonplace to say that people want to know what happened just around the corner and that is why this element is sometimes called ‘relevance’ (Ward, 2002) and it is linked to the ‘interest’ and ‘importance’ elements (Manning, 2001). This criterion is very important for local news organisations (Rosenstiel et al., 2007). The authors state the target of making the news local:

To unite a community through the sharing of information about local happenings, including legislation, education, jobs ... through the analysis of the impact national and international events have on our community, through the sharing of joy and angst, triumph and tragedy, of our neighbours (ibid, p. 18).

It is worth noting that Internet penetration has not resulted — at least yet — in the creation of the global village where proximity as a geographical criteria has lost its significance. Recent trends in creating hubs by chains of newspapers to recycle and generalise content in order to save on costs of production are being criticised by Pilling (2006), who points at one of many examples in the United Kingdom of localism being revived after experience that such practices caused news organisations to lose audience:

Amongst all this change, one high-profile editor [of the *Birmingham Mail*], Steve Dyson, was returning to traditional local values — increasing local coverage and investing in local journalists to halt long-term decline in circulations... going back to what he saw as the local paper’s traditional values which focus on the ultralocal (ibid, p. 113).

That ultralocal dimension consolidates connections between media organisations and people. It is important in many markets if they wish to keep their readers, as described in research by Forde, Foxwell, & Meadows (2003). More than 90 percent of community radio news-workers defined ‘proximity’ as the most important factor they considered when considering a story idea. While 66 percent nominated proximity as a ‘very important’ news value, only 29 percent said that timeliness was ‘very important’ and 20 percent that impact on the community was. The presence of famous or prominent people in a story was not very important to community radio news-workers, nor was the presence of conflict in a story.

Understanding of ‘proximity’ as a criterion of newsworthiness is not as complicated and permeated by controversies as some other criteria analysed in this section and, therefore, it is expedient to analyse most of the content of this criterion in a table format.



**Table 6. Elements and descriptors for the criterion ‘proximity’**

<i>Elements and content of the criterion</i>	<i>Quality statements made in literature, author</i>	<i>Elements of the descriptors in different levels of the NTA, explanations where needed</i>
Local news	<p>Proximity is a measure of where the information comes from. An item which originates locally is usually of more newsworthiness than one from a distance. People want to know about their own community first (Masterton, 1991)</p> <p>Whatever occurs close to the audience’s community (people’s backyard) is more interesting for people than what happens far away even if the ‘far away’ event is much weightier (Fuller, 1996; Ward, 2002). “One might delight to hear that the daughter of someone he knew had just received a prestigious scholarship, but he would shudder at the brutal murder of a stranger’s child a continent away” (Fuller, 1996, p. 8 )</p> <p>Concerns people, events, or institutions in the immediate coverage area (Bridges &amp; Bridges, 1997)</p> <p>Proximity concerns people, events, or institutions in the immediate coverage area (Bridges &amp; Bridges, 1997)</p> <p>Proximity is judged by how ‘close to home’ a story is: a car crash that kills four people in the local community could be seen as more important than 4,000 dead in Somalia (Burns, 2002)</p> <p>“Clearly, the death of a soldier from the newspaper’s region corresponds to this [proximity] criterion more than the death of a soldier from outside the region. Therefore, it is likely that those regional newspapers will provide more coverage to those casualties from their own region than to those casualties from other regions ... Individuals from a given region may identify more with local losses; the soldier may have attended the same high school, dated your cousin, worked at the local grocery store, and so forth” (Hayes &amp; Myers, 2009, p. 81, insert added).</p> <p>‘[W]e spend too much time on craft and not enough time on community. Many of the new sites, even if they don’t have the</p>	<p><b>‘good’:</b> news happened in the area; or involves a resident of the area; or a local organisation; or news is otherwise directly relevant to the audience</p> <p><b>‘inappropriate’:</b> news has little relevance to the readership; or description of proximity or relevance are unclear</p> <p><b>‘unacceptable’:</b> news has nothing to do with the readership</p>

	<p>most polished reports, are flipping that: community first." (Michele McLellan, a fellow at the Reynolds Journalism Institute at the University of Missouri, who studied about 70 best American hyperlocal sites is quoted as saying in Moskowitz, 2010)</p>	
Local angle for news occurred elsewhere	<p>Important international stories are often made more relevant to a local audience by giving them a local spin (Rolston, 1991)</p> <p>The local connection does not mean that the story should be merely local, but the local relevance of the story — be it international or national — should be made clear (Clausen, 2004; Cohen, Levy, Roch, &amp; Gurevitch, 1996; Hayes &amp; Myers, 2009; Rosenstiel et al., 2007)</p> <p>“Media maintain both global and culturally specific orientations – such as by casting faraway events in frameworks that render these events comprehensible, appealing and relevant to domestic audiences; and second, by constructing the meanings of these events in ways that are compatible with the culture and the dominant ideology of societies they serve” (Gurevitch, Levy, &amp; Roeh, 1991, p. 206)</p> <p>To localise news, a local angle should be given in the story, for example a local person died in an airplane crash far away (Mencher, 1994)</p> <p>Many news organisations are putting effort into ‘domesticating’ international news to make it more meaningful to the local population (Clausen, 2004; Cohen, Levy, Roch, &amp; Gurevitch, 1996)</p> <p>In the study of how the Eurovision news editors made news selection, the editors were found not only to prioritise domestic news over foreign, but also to seek to provide stories from other countries a “special localised or domestic slant” (Cohen et al., 1996, p. 85)</p> <p>To localise news, “look for local effects, interview local experts, and seek local reaction” (Lorenz &amp; Vivian, 1996, p. 212)</p> <p>More than any other daily medium, newspapers should provide detail and information that relates non-local news to the local community if they want to</p>	<p><b>‘outstanding’</b>: important non-local news has been provided with local angle where relevant</p> <p><b>‘inappropriate’</b>: local angle is provided unnecessarily</p>

	<p>survive (Bridges &amp; Bridges, 1997)</p> <p>Sometimes a local spin on international stories makes sense but at other times the “localising” of this international conflict seemed rather contrived, even surreal (Rolston &amp; McLaughlin, 2004)</p> <p>Events taking place in cultures or contexts that are very different from that of the publication’s target readership will not be seen as meaningful and will not be published. Thus, an accident in one region of the country is not likely to be interesting in media of another region unless a local resident is among the casualties. Some news, for example, a breach of security in one region could be looked at from the other region’s perspective (Niblock, 2005)</p> <p>“National elections, tragedies, terrorism, war and other national events can all be localized by focusing on people in your area who are affected” (Rich, 2009, p. 79)</p>	
News about human interest issues: culture, medicine, science, security etc	<p>There are social and cultural proximities which have little relationship to geographical distances (Masterton, 1991)</p> <p>Proximity is measured by how emotionally close news is to the reader, viewer or listener (Mencher, 1994)</p> <p>In news about science and medicine journalism often views proximity as an unimportant factor because the findings are equally relevant to people no matter where they live (Kiernan, 2003).</p> <p>Also important is professional proximity (Fuller, 1996; Ward, 2002), or relevance of news based on common interests, concerns and activities, especially in online publications (Ward, 2002)</p>	<b>‘good’</b> : news is otherwise directly relevant to the audience

In the table, ‘proximity’ was analysed as relevancy to the news audience. But another aspect should also be assessed — whether or not the ‘where’ question was addressed in the story at all. Such omissions can often be seen in news stories by novice journalists. Therefore, the phrase, ‘the ‘where’ question is not addressed’ could be added to the descriptor in the ‘unacceptable’ level of quality.

While descriptors for all but one level of performance were relatively easy to formulate, coming up with the descriptors of ‘acceptable’ level of quality which would describe some

observable performance appeared to be impossible. Therefore, it was decided to create an implicit descriptor that would fit between the neighbouring levels of quality: ‘good’ level of performance has a minor deficiency’ — on the condition that using this descriptor will be appended by a personal note from the instructor explaining the reason for the choice.

### 3.2.4. *Prominence*

This criterion is well-described in the journalistic literature. That names make news and big names make big news is a cliché (Brooks et al., 1988; Granato, 1991). The criterion is generally considered to involve well-known people, physical objects or organisations (Bridges & Bridges, 1997; Mencher, 1994) to the extent that the smallest incident involving a very prominent person gets a lot of coverage. Stories about people who are in the public eye have much higher news value than those about obscure people, even if the occurrences are the same (DeFleur & Dennis, 2002). What the president, or prime minister, or acknowledged expert says or does makes news (Masterton, 1994). The president’s well-being “has far greater implications than yours or mine” (Lorenz & Vivian, 1996, p. 24).

When the president trips disembarking from an airplane, it is front-page news; when a city councilman missteps, it is not worth a line in print. A local banker’s embezzlement is more newsworthy than a clerk’s thievery, even when the clerk has stolen more (Mencher, 1994, p. 51).

Sport stars, royals, actors, singers and models get a lot of attention in media and there “seems to be a mixture of hero worship tempered by a desire to cut down tall poppies” (Granato, 1991, p. 32). The name of Princess Diana — as a kind of icon worship — still makes headlines despite her having died in 1997.

No matter how insignificant Michael Jordan’s performance in minor-league baseball may have been to the history of the United States, the deep popular interest in it justified extensive coverage (Fuller, 1996, p. 7).

Prominence depends on the importance of the person, physical object or organisation and media at various levels have their own human or non-human ‘celebrities’:

The repair of a major bridge in Adron is given coverage in that city, but when the Golden Gate Bridge shuts down that action merits national coverage (Mencher, 1994, p. 52).

‘Well-knownness’ is identified by past publicity or position in the community or society (Bridges & Bridges, 1997). Elite nations are newsworthy as well as elite people (Galtung & Ruge, 1973). Public officials and public figures are considered prominent figures (Brooks et al., 1988; Mencher, 1994). Names associated with well-known organisations are also given prominence (Brooks et al., 1988). Known names in business and entertainment are prominent because of their power, privilege, prestige and profile (Tully, 2008b). Some people are, however, famous “for being famous” (ibid, p. 4). This case may include the hyped coverage

of the British 4 year old, Madeleine McCann, who went missing in Portugal. Neither she nor her parents were known before she went missing.

While there is some debate on whether or not news about celebrities merits the attention the media give them, there is practically no controversy about what are the observable patterns of prominence in news texts. The only complexity with creating the descriptors for the NTA1 was articulating the ‘outstanding’ level of quality. To come up with these descriptors, the guideline were used (see section 1.4.3.5). The guidelines suggest that the descriptor can be based on something extra to normal performance. Such an ‘extra’ could be a high-profile case in which any of the subjects that usually constitute prominence (persons, objects, organisations) could be involved.

### 3.2.5. *Unexpectedness*

The ‘unexpectedness’ criterion in this research will combine the main meanings of such elements of newsworthiness mentioned by different authors as novelty, unexpectedness, newness, oddity, surprise, bizarre, unusualness, unpredictability, and weirdness (see table in section 3.1.2). Statements that typify these elements were not controversial or difficult to articulate.

**Table 7. Elements and descriptors for the criterion ‘unexpectedness’**

<i>Elements of the criterion</i>	<i>Quality statements made in literature, author</i>	<i>Elements of the descriptors in different levels of the NTA, explanations where needed</i>
Unusualness, unexpectedness	<p>News should deviate sharply from the expected, everyday occurrence or events of routine nature — they should be unusual, or rare rather than just the unusual, unexpected, odd, surprising, unpredictable, or peculiar (Bridges &amp; Bridges, 1997; DeFleur &amp; Dennis, 2002; Galtung &amp; Ruge, 1965; Harcup &amp; O'Neill, 2001; Masterton, 1992; Mencher, 1994; Niblock, 2005; Palmer, 2000; Scanlan, 2000)</p> <p>This is ‘man bites dog’ type of news (DeFleur &amp; Dennis, 2002; Galtung &amp; Ruge, 1973; Randall, 2000) or ‘politician changing party as opposed to politician sticking to party’ (Burns, 2002)</p> <p>The unusual can be newsworthy because it is interesting, or unique, or odd (Lorenz &amp; Vivian, 1996)</p> <p>Cover issues, not meetings, and people,</p>	<p><b>‘good’</b>: news is sudden and unexpected, including that something important that was expected did not happen</p> <p>The descriptor for ‘acceptable’ level of performance is based on the understanding that in practice much news that was scheduled in advance is covered:</p> <p><b>‘acceptable’</b>: News is an ordinary or a scheduled event or occurrence</p> <p><b>‘inappropriate’</b>: news is about something that did not happen</p> <p><b>‘unacceptable’</b>: ‘An event took place’ angle is chosen</p>

	<p>not events. “Most meetings are dull, and are set up to be that way” (Parks, 2006, p. 100)</p> <p>“The worst meeting stories aren’t just dull — they’re irrelevant unknown officials making unintelligible decisions about unfamiliar problems” (Harrower, 2007, p. 105)</p> <p>Something that did not happen despite it being expected may make news too (Ward, 2002). “[F]or example, when a local council, police force, hospital trust or government body takes no action following a series of complaints from the public” (p. 48)</p>	
Extreme unexpectedness	<p>The definitions ‘what-a-story’ (Tuchman, 1973) and ‘holy shit’ (Romano, 1986) are used as a climax of the concept of unusualness</p> <p>The most prized stories tend to be exclusives, ‘scoops’. Such stories attract more readers and give the most prominence for the publication. Even if the story is known, a new twist will provide its coverage authority over the competitors (Niblock, 2005)</p> <p>The “brand new” stories Ward (2002) classifies as “original’ news” saying that such news “often has more impact than developments of existing news”, “more dramatic, or revelatory”, but also “scarcer commodity” (p. 40)</p>	‘ <b>outstanding</b> ’: news is extremely unusual unique or exclusive
New angle	<p>Most journalists spend a large part of each day trying to find a new angle or development for the already known story (Ward, 2002)</p> <p>“Even when the story is known to other journalists, each paper will be in hot pursuit of a new twist to lend their coverage authority over their competitors” (Keeble, 2005, p. 77).</p>	‘ <b>inappropriate</b> ’: story did not take a new angle where necessary

This criterion is rare for having no controversies and misunderstandings, and, therefore, does not need much discussion to be able to come up with descriptors. All of them have been formulated on the basis of statements in the literature. The only point to be elaborated on is the importance of allocating the descriptor ‘an event took place’ angle is chosen in the ‘unacceptable’ level of quality. Judging by the experience of this researcher in training news reporters in the post-USSR newsrooms, using this angle is one of the most typical problems of news reporting in all the former Soviet republics. More than that, the format ‘otchyot’, or

‘report on the event’ is taught in most textbooks, even newly-issued ones, and media contain such stories in abundance. Therefore, making it clear to news reporters that they should focus on issues and people by allocating it in the ‘unacceptable’ level of quality is extremely important.

### 3.2.6. *Conflict*

Conflict is often seen as the most important news value (Burns, 2002; Granato, 1991).

For journalists, issues that include risk and uncertainty enable the writing of stories with higher informational value. They are intuitively more interesting to most people (Dearing, 1995, p. 342).

Consider just several popular notions of conflict:

- Harmony is dull, but strife is newsworthy (DeFleur & Dennis, 2002)
- Bad news is more exciting than good news (Galtung & Ruge, 1965)
- “News ... accentuates the negative.” (Fuller, 1996, p. 8)
- Bad events are more newsworthy than good ones (Palmer, 2000)
- “News tends to be bad news” (Schudson, 1995, p. 9)
- The more violence the conflict involves — deaths, injuries, and damage to property — the stronger is its news value (Granato, 1991)
- The stronger the contrast between the points of view, the greater the conflict (Burns, 2002)
- “News ... accentuates the negative. People’s curiosity shows a tropism for misfortune. Disaster always becomes the talk of a community in a way that good fortune less commonly does. Trouble touches some people’s empathy and others’ sense of doom. Fear and anger operate strongly at greater distances than love, so bad news travels farther” (Fuller, 1996, p. 8)
- “[I]t is frequently observed that journalists seem almost obsessed with the negative, the gloomy and the downright sad” (Glover, 1999, p. 80).

The meaning of this criterion is as multifaceted as many other newsworthiness elements and, therefore, conflict in this research will serve as a generic name for any occurrence with negative overtones (Harcup & O'Neill, 2001). Such occurrences include: clashes or difference of opinion between people or institutions, strife, antagonism and confrontations, internal struggles of people with themselves, drama (Mencher, 1994); fight between forces or ideas or values (Granato, 1991); of people against a system or in conflict with events beyond their control (Baker, 2002). The notion of conflict also includes war and crime (Granato, 1991; Masterton, 1991), especially kidnappings, rapes, severe bashings and murders, riots, trials, demonstrations, street marches, industrial disputes, sporting events, parliamentary debates, election campaigns, retrenchments, bankruptcies (Granato, 1991); dissension and battle (Schudson, 1995); any open clashes between persons, groups, animals or things or involving a clash with any of these four against nature (Bridges & Bridges, 1997), messy

divorces, child custody battles, rebellions, personal vendettas (DeFleur & Dennis, 2002) and even “two neighbours in a boundary dispute” (Tully, 2008b, p. 4).

In pursuit of the readers’ interest, journalists look for conflicts “even in instances of relative consensus” inspired by a professional norm that there are at least two sides to every story (Schudson, 1995, p. 9). However, inexperienced journalists are likely to miss or fail to see conflict and thus weaken the possible story if they do not possess a conceptual frame to apply:

A journalist who sees an event in terms of conflict will ask questions that might not even occur to a journalist who sees the event in terms of novelty, and vice versa. Therefore, the stories these two journalists will write about the same event will differ in emphasis and thrust. Indeed, they may differ so drastically that they might even appear to be written about different events (Granato, 1991, p. 36).

Despite the value of conflict for news writing among professional journalists, readers — and, especially, officials — do not always appreciate the negativity of media. The mayor of Christchurch (New Zealand) Bob Parker was quoted as commenting on the statistics that 64.5 percent of the population<sup>48</sup> in his town said in a survey that they feel unsafe:

We are continually bombarded with messages which make us believe that our world is a less safe place. I think there is incredible media focus on what is negative in our world (McCombe, 2009).

Training journalists to think about the balance of different news writing criteria and the cumulative effect of news operating by certain values on people’s perceptions and how they fulfil wider public responsibility functions cannot be well taught at the level of the individual story. However, although there is much concern about too much negativity in the news including in academic literature, it is undoubtedly a prominent criterion of good journalism and must be part of training. Conflict and negative frames indeed continue to feature into modern textbooks as classic markers of newsworthiness or news values criteria (Rich, 2009; Tully, 2008b) and the weight of this criterion in news reporting is unlikely to change soon, if ever.

An important point of controversy about reporting on conflicts and, especially wars or armed or frozen conflicts is that it should not be aimed at inflaming the conflict but rather on its resolution by way of more explanatory, in-depth reporting and seeking solutions (Botes, 1996; Ozgunes, 2000). Ozgunes warns: “In the developing world, with its underdeveloped economies and civil societies, things escalate much faster and further leading to great disasters” (p. 406). Marthoz points out the responsibility of journalists who report ethnic conflicts: “when dealing with these issues journalists do not play with words, they play with guns” (Marthoz, 1995, p. 7).

---

<sup>48</sup> This figure is higher than in “any other urban centre in the country and significantly higher than the 47 percent national average (McCombe, 2009, p. 17)



Despite the apparent importance and responsibilities of the issue of war reporting<sup>49</sup>, especially for journalists in the developing world, this issue will not be covered in this research as well as many other specialised issues and beat reporting because of space constraints. Some of the elements of news coverage that could be instrumental in reporting serious conflicts are, however, covered in other criteria including ‘objectivity as a method’ (fair coverage), ‘explanations’ (going in-depth on the reasons and other issues of conflicts), ‘practical use’ (emphasising solutions) and ‘use of language’ (avoiding the use of charged language).

Descriptions of the content of the conflict and negativity news value given above cannot fit the limited space of the NTA and, therefore, only descriptors of the most typical occurrences is given in the ‘good’ level of quality. The descriptor ‘first-hand reporting from war or dangerous areas’ was created to fit the ‘outstanding’ level of quality because such content of the criterion puts the life of the reporter at the highest risk. This corresponds to the statement by Dearing (1995) that issues that embed risk enable the writing of stories with higher informational value than stories with lesser levels of conflict. The descriptors in the other three levels of quality were formulated using the guidelines in section 1.4.3.5.

### 3.2.7. *General interest*

This is not a criterion widely recommended in the journalistic literature, though some authors like Scanlan (2000) suggest using a generalised criterion labelled ‘interest’ to judge the news value of news stories. The idea of introducing this criterion arose under the influence of the following two statements:

Each story must be written to reflect its unique circumstances, not to fit into a formula of what journalism is supposed to look like (Parks, 2006, p. 96).

Another statement is labelled “Rule Number 1: There Are no Rules” (Baker, 2002, p. 5):

If you remember nothing else, remember Rule Number 1. It is a joyful tribute to the fact that no two news stories or circumstances are the same, that each reporter has to make his own decisions, has to be in control of his own story. News operations that disregard this rule take on the collective mentality of the golfing gorilla [that makes perfect shots of 210 yards each time it hits, disregarding the actual position of the ball]. The gorilla’s human counterpart is the reporter who does a heart-wrenching, two-hour interview with a family whose child is battling a fatal illness, then comes back to the office and writes twelve inches of copy because two days ago the assistant city editor told him his piece on a fund-raising event was too long.” (ibid, p. 5-6)

This criterion was designed to juxtapose the possibly formulaic approach to the assessment of news stories by news experts within the limits of suggested descriptors and give them more freedom to assess the appeal and the readability of news stories. In addition, boring stories are

---

<sup>49</sup> Media can be powerful enough even to affect foreign policy decisions including the decisions of policymakers to intervene (Hawkins, 2002; Robinson, 1999, 2000)

extremely often written by inexperienced journalists for whom the NTA is being designed. Therefore, descriptors in this criterion were formulated holistically, as a general perception of whether the story is worth reading or not.

### **3.3. Factual quality and credibility**

What people ultimately want from news media are truths that will help them make informed choices in life. This is despite a philosophical dispute about what counts as truth having run for many centuries and there being no agreement on what it is (Brooks, et al., 1988; Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001). Journalism authors agree that truth in its philosophical sense is not achievable at all. Brown (1987, p. 229), for instance, points out that there is “no certainty at any point in human knowledge”.

[H]ow likely is it that the Catholic Church and the Planned Parenthood organization would agree on the “truth” about abortion, or that a president and his challenger would agree on the “truth” about the state of the American economy? (Brooks, et al., 1988, p. 20).

Columbia University historian Simon Schama was quoted by Kovach & Rosenstiel (2001) as pessimistically suggesting that “the certainty of an ultimately observable, empirically verifiable ‘truth’ is dead” (p. 40). Brown (1987) explains the uncertainty with the never-ending expansion of the body of knowledge by the advance of methodology and the use of analysis. “[I]t seems clear that we should adopt a rather modest view toward the knowledge that we have accumulated” (p. 230). Journalism authors, therefore, persistently search for some standard of truth acceptable for news journalism. Fuller (1996), for instance, asked rhetorically: “What is the proper standard of truth for the news?” and replies to himself that news can contain “at most a provisional kind of truth” (p. 5).

The following statement of shared purpose, published by the Pew Research Center for Excellence in Journalism on its website, further clarifies the dynamic nature of the journalistic understanding of truth and also adds the need to put facts in context to the notion of truthfulness:

Journalism does not pursue truth in an absolute or philosophical sense, but it can — and must — pursue it in a practical sense. This “journalistic truth” is a process that begins with the professional discipline of assembling and verifying facts. Then journalists try to convey a fair and reliable account of their meaning, valid for now, subject to further investigation. Journalists should be as transparent as possible about sources and methods so audiences can make their own assessment of the information. Even in a world of expanding voices, accuracy is the foundation upon which everything else is built — context, interpretation, comment, criticism, analysis and debate. The truth, over time, emerges from this forum. As citizens encounter an ever greater flow of data, they have more need — not less — for identifiable sources dedicated to verifying that information and putting it in context (“Principles of journalism,” 2006).

Kovach and Rosenstiel add: “This practical truth is a protean thing which, like learning, grows as a stalagmite in a cave, drop by drop over time” (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001, p. 42). Practical truth can be contradictory and elusive, the way that “life really is, often striving and never fully achieving” (ibid, p. 45).

The concept of gradually improved versions of truth contradicts what is often used in practice and is called ‘a word against a word’. Such an approach is illustrated by Granato (1991), who suggests that if some contradictory facts are obtained by the reporter, there is no need to verify them but simply to attribute them to the sources. For example, Granato writes, in a news story on a petrol price increase during the Gulf War of 1990, a journalist obtained two different figures of the price hike for Sydney: A chair of the Price Surveillance Authority gave the average price as 81.5 cents per litre, while a spokesperson for the New South Wales Independent Petrol Station Owners Association put it at 78.5 cents. Since checking prices on petrol in all Sydney petrol station to figure out the average would be “exorbitantly expensive in time and money”, the journalists “simply reports what Source A says and what Source B says and leaves it to the reader to choose between them” (Granato, 1991, p. 61). However, Kovach & Rosenstiel (2001) criticised such an approach calling it a “cacophony” (p. 47) by failing to sort out and verify facts, presenting instead inconsistent and therefore meaningless information. Facts in a journalistic story should not be “merely enumerated”, but they should be “organized and examined” (Plotnik, 1982, p. 28).

The notions that journalistic authors use to define truthfulness are verification, accuracy, transparency about sources and methods, and identifiable sources. Another element of journalistic truthfulness is the comprehensiveness of news reports (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001; Steele, 2000) which not only means the coverage of basic facts, but also that facts of major importance should not be omitted. Lippmann (1922) writes that the function of truth is not only to bring to light the hidden facts, but also to set them into relation to each other. This helps to “make a picture of reality upon which men can act. Only at those points, where social conditions take recognizable and measurable shape, do the body of truth and the body of news coincide” (p. 205).

However, journalism authors note the major discrepancy between the best efforts to deliver the journalistic truth and the perceptions of their writing as truthful by the audience. First, even journalistic ‘truth’ as the best obtainable version of truth is next to impossible to reach because of biases and preconceptions of news consumers: “Facts that are apparent in face-to-face interaction become subject to different interpretations among geographically and culturally diverse viewers and readers” (Patterson & Wilkins, 1994, p. 22). Secondly, many people have their own truth to which they stick, neglecting other possible truths. This complication in the perception of truth was first acknowledged by Lippmann in his seminal

book *Public Opinion* published over 80 years ago. Lippmann wrote that people tend to distort reality by creating “the pictures inside our heads” (Lippmann, 1991, p. 3). Such pictures, which he also labelled “pseudo-environment” (ibid, p. 15) are influenced by emotional factors, ego needs, stereotypes that they have of events, people and things. In other words, the degree of the distortion of the reality depends on the mental constructs that people developed prior to the perception of information. “[W]e do not first see, and then define — we define first, and then see” (ibid, p. 81).

Recent research showed even more reasons that contribute to the perceived bias in news reporting, such as having strong prior opinions about a specific issue covered in the news story and involvement of the news consumers with a controversial issue (Gunther & Liebhart, 2006; Pronin, Gilovich, & Ross, 2004; Vallone, Ross, & Lepper, 1985). Such people tend to see news coverage of such issues as biased in favour of the other side regardless of the content of a story. In research by Vallone et al., (1985) comparing Arab, Israeli and non-partisans’ perception of slant in news stories, the latter did not see any bias while the partisans perceived the stories to be more favourable to the other side. Gunther & Liebhart (2006) wrote that partisans will see bias whether it exists or not.

Mounting empirical evidence leaves little doubt that partisans on all sides of an issue will be systematically likely to criticize mass media for presenting unfavorable, slanted, or biased news coverage (Gunther & Liebhart, 2006, p. 464).

The “sin” of the partisans lay in their readiness to use their prior convictions developed in a biased manner, and in doing so they expose themselves “to the familiar risk of making their hypotheses unfalsifiable” (Lord, Ross, & Lepper, 1979, p. 2107). These authors warn that such risk is serious in a “domain where it is clear that at least one party in a dispute holds a false hypothesis — and allowing themselves to be encouraged by patterns of data that they ought to have found troubling” (ibid). Not only lay people but professional scientists are prone to clinging to beliefs and theories that no longer match the best available evidence (Lord, et al., 1979; Mahoney, 1977).

[D]ata relevant to a belief are not processed impartially. Instead, judgments about the validity, reliability, relevance, and sometimes even the meaning of proffered evidence are biased by the apparent consistency of that evidence with the perceiver’s theories and expectations. Thus individuals will dismiss and discount empirical evidence that contradicts their initial views but will derive support from evidence, of no greater probativeness, that seems consistent with their views (Lord et al., 1979, p. 2099).

This means that when the “general public attempts to treat incoming information in a systematic manner, they tend to be greatly influenced by both internal and external factors” (Huge & Glynn, 2010, p. 167) while “people of opposing views can each find support for those views in the same body of evidence” (Lord et al., 1979, p. 2108).

Such conclusions are practically important regarding both news writing and creating the NTA news texts assessment system. It means that results of surveys on whether news journalism is inaccurate or biased are to an extent determined not by the actual bias, but by the bias perceived by partisan news consumers even if the information is balanced and fair judging by news standards. In these circumstances writing news reports on a controversial issue that everyone would perceive as truthful is impossible. Therefore, the truth, while an ultimate goal, is too connected to ideology to be easily pinned down in criteria of news writing. This needs to be approached through the use of a professional journalism toolbox that includes verification of facts, transparency, fairness, balance and other professional values.

For the convenience of this research in breaking down complex issues truthfulness as a major parent category was split into two categories. The first includes criteria dealing with the trustworthiness of news stories was labelled ‘factual quality and credibility’. The criteria in this category that will be detailed in the scoring rubric are: ‘accuracy’ as verified and consistent information, ‘comprehensiveness’ as full coverage, and three separate criteria linked to the use of sources: ‘description of sources’ in which issues linked to the detailed description of sources that give them credibility will be covered, ‘circumstances in which information was obtained’, in which journalists will have to provide transparent accounts of how they received information, and ‘attribution to sources’, which deals with the way information is attributed in the news texts. Elements dealing with the creation of meaning including ‘context’ and ‘explanations’, were allocated into a separate, ‘Meaning’ category (see section 3.4.)

### *3.3.1. Accuracy*

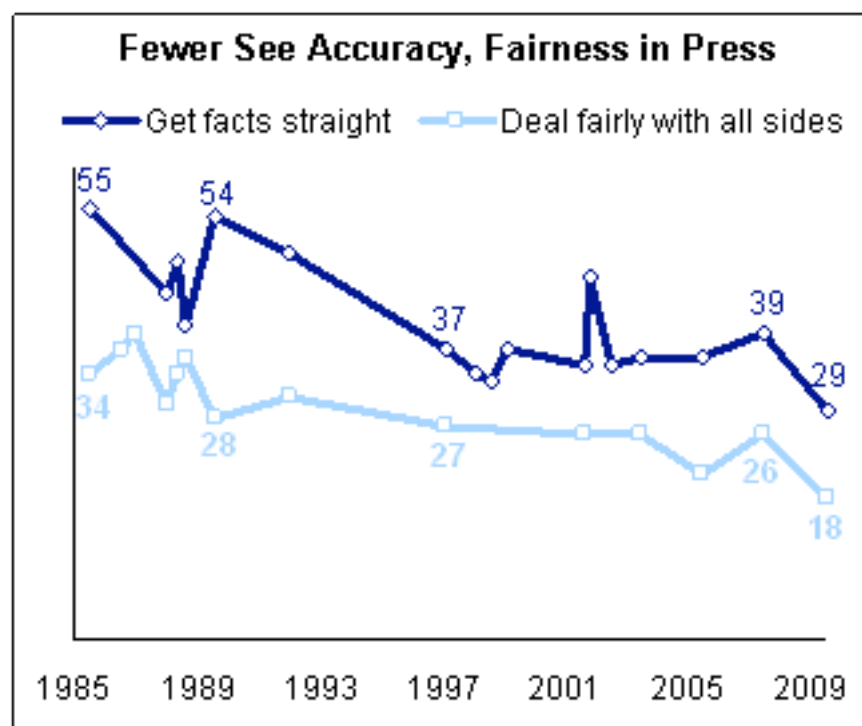
Journalists should provide people with “accurate and reliable information” so that they can “make informed judgments in a self-governing society” (Kovach, 2006). Accuracy is considered to be the core element of truthfulness which is “the foundation upon which everything else builds: context, interpretation, debate ... If the foundation is faulty, everything else is flawed” (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001, p. 43). Accuracy is the “bedrock of credibility” (Miller, 2002), a “journalistic Grail” (McLellan, 2001), “the most important characteristic of any story, great or small, long or short” (Brooks, et al., 1988, p. 21).

#### **3.3.1.1. Problems with accuracy**

With all the characteristics of accuracy as a primary target of news reporting, the rate of inaccuracies “is a long-term problem of the first magnitude for news organizations” (Fuller,

1996, p. 11). Research by the New Zealand-based survey company, UMR<sup>50</sup>, conducted in September 2009 showed that only 35 percent of the country's population believe that media are accurate when reporting news while a quarter said it is inaccurate and 40 percent were unsure or had a neutral opinion ("Perceptions of New Zealand media," 2009). The problem with inaccuracies is typical and even increasing in the United States despite its long history of research and training in basic journalism standards. In a Pew Center survey conducted in 2009 in the United States, 63 percent of Americans said that news stories are often inaccurate, while less than a third answered that news organisations got their facts straight ("Press accuracy rating hits two decade low," 2009). This is a substantial decline from a survey of 24 years ago that 55 percent of Americans believed that news reports in media were accurate.

**Figure 9. Comparison of accuracy of news stories in 1985 and 2009 in the USA**



Source: Pew Research Center for the People and the Press

Another reason for the decline in accuracy of news reports is likely to be the pressure in recent years that has made news organisations cut their staff including copy-editors (Arrietta-Walden, 2005; Whitney, 2009), increasing the workload of journalists.

A very popular reason for mistakes is deadline pressure. Many news organisations refer to accuracy in their mottos. For instance Reuters define accuracy as a primary obligation above timeliness: "Accuracy comes first. It's better to be late than wrong" ("Reuters handbook of

<sup>50</sup> UMR Research Ltd is a New Zealand market research and evaluation company specialising in corporate reputation, issue management, policy, evaluation, social and rural research.

journalism," 2008, p. 4). BBC policy also puts accuracy above the speed of putting out the news: "our newsroom lives by the maxim that while 'first and right' is best of all, 'second and right' is far better than 'first and wrong' (Harding, 2002, p. 67). However, mistakes happen. Even such an advanced newspaper as the *New York Times* publishes corrections to almost one out of every 14 news stories, "thus indicating that news items are sometimes published too quickly" (Karlsson, 2010).

In the digital age that has sped up the cycle of news turnover, none of the quality news organisations are prepared to lower standards of accuracy in news reporting. For example, Craig Whitney, managing editor of the *New York Times* overseeing journalistic standards, said in his answer to a reader's question regarding "loosening up" on standards, that despite the layoffs and the pressure it put on the editorial office, checking facts and ensuring accuracy and fairness "remain our prime directives now more than ever" (Whitney, 2009). It may not be so elsewhere in the world, and even in other American newspapers. In a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center in April 2010, 53 percent of newspaper and 62 percent of broadcast executives thought the Internet was changing the fundamental values of journalism. Their biggest concern was falling standards of accuracy and verification because of competition with the Internet ("News executives, skeptical of government subsidies, see opportunity in technology but are unsure about revenue and the future," 2010). This means that accuracy should be considered to be the core — or one of the major elements — of the NTA.

In the next sections complexities, disagreements and other statements will be discussed on various aspects of accuracy in order to come up with the descriptors for the NTA.

### **3.3.1.2. Accuracy and other news writing criteria**

Some authors do not distinguish between accuracy and other news writing criteria which could be instrumental in setting up identifiable patterns of accurate news reporting. For example Tully (2008) includes fairness in the notion of accuracy as a reportorial procedure: "At a deeper level, accuracy is the seeking out of all relevant facts, independently verifying them and reporting them correctly and fairly" (p. 125). However, Brooks et al. (1988) see accuracy and fairness as separate notions saying that they are "related, but they are not the same" (p. 21). Some authors see accuracy as even more complex a notion:

Accuracy is not just about getting the basic facts right. It is also about weighing them, assessing their importance and making sense of them by putting them into some sort of overall shape. Accuracy is about context and perspective (Harding, 2002, p. 67).

Such an understanding of accuracy includes not only the precision of the reporting, but also balancing facts, putting them in context and assessing them. This combination may make

sense in explaining what accurate news reporting is about, but it is not instrumental for either assessment or instruction. Including such elements as treating facts fairly, analysing them, assessing their importance and structuring the story in the notion of accuracy unnecessarily complicates this criterion while assessment and instruction need the opposite — defining the pure sense of the criterion. Identifying the core of accuracy as the criterion meant that many decisions had to be made along the way. For example, in the 44 Tips for greater accuracy Fee recommends assigning one-sidedness of news reporting to ‘accuracy’:

- A one-sided or one-source story simply is not a complete story and can never be an accurate one.
- The other side may provide important information that makes the story accurate (Fee, n.d.).

Despite the logic of these statements, the descriptor ‘story is one-sided on a contentious issue’ has been assigned to the ‘objectivity as a method’ criterion because it belongs more to fairness and balance of a news story than to accuracy. Fee himself calls these statements, the “Rule of fair comment.” It was decided that the most logical and typical content of accuracy is getting facts right. Therefore, in this research this understanding of accuracy will be used as the basis of the criterion.

### **3.3.1.3. Benchmarks in verification of facts**

Mistakes occur at different levels of the operation of a news organisation ("Chicago Tribune error policy," 2003). In this research only those for which news reporters can bear responsibility will be discussed. There are several apparent gradations in this notion — firstly, getting basic facts right including names, ages, addresses, dates, and quotes; secondly, getting verifiable facts right; thirdly, getting all the facts in the story right and, finally, wrongdoing. The first three categories of mistakes occur mostly because journalists do not sufficiently verify information and — as it is often the case with inexperienced journalists or journalists from post-authoritarian countries — often put on paper anything they heard. As the Reuters news agency handbook says:

Cross-check information wherever possible. Two or more sources are better than one ... Single-source stories are subject to a special authorisation procedure ("Reuters handbook of journalism," 2008, p. 3).

In journalism practice, the ‘gold standard’ (Tambini, 2009), or the ‘rule of two sources’ is usually applied, which means that at least two sources, independent from each other and reliable, should confirm information to bring it to a publishable standard (Bickler et al., 2004). Some authors assert that one-source stories should be ruled out completely, especially if the information is of questionable veracity (Lee & Solomon, 1990; Rich, 2009). In



controversial stories it is important not to “hide the complexity, but make clear that different people have different opinions on the question” (Bickler, et al., 2004, p. 66).

However, standards of verification are not the same in all news organisations, resources are scarce, and time pressure high. This results in ignoring the “gold standard of two named sources for each story for the simple reasons that sometimes one person in the right position is enough to verify a story, particularly if it involves that person and time is scarce” (Tambini, 2009, p. 169). Tambini’s interviewees, financial journalists, indicated that depending on the impact of the story on the market they may employ higher verification standards. The author did not elaborate on what these standards would be.

These statements helped to create the descriptors for three levels of quality: the ‘good’ level of quality as the need to get information from at least two primary sources, the ‘outstanding’ benchmark for sensitive information that requires not only two-plus sources, but also an additional check with an independent expert; and the ‘acceptable’ level, in which sources who were not the best were approached, but they were nevertheless competent and relevant.

**‘outstanding’:** except the descriptions in the ‘good’ level, story contains evidence that sensitive, error-prone, controversial or dubious information has been additionally checked with an independent source

**‘good’:** all facts and figures have been obtained from at least two primary competent sources independent from each other

**‘acceptable’:** all facts and figures are obtained from competent relevant sources.

It should be acknowledged that the ‘outstanding’ level of quality is extremely difficult to achieve. Tambini (2009) quoted his interviewees as saying that intense professional pressures limit “the extent to which additional sources can be accessed and verification standards maintained” (p. 165) and as a result many journalists “rely on a narrower range of established news sources such as PR companies” (ibid). However, practical problems of verification should not result in lowering of professional benchmarks.

### **Getting basic facts right or avoidable mistakes**

A triple “Accuracy!” was the motto of the legendary journalism figure Joseph Pulitzer at the end of the 19th century. Pulitzer’s idea of accuracy was to get the names, ages and addresses correct (Emery, 1962). This basic Pulitzer motto had a “great deal of practical wisdom” behind it: “Get the little things wrong and readers will not trust you to get the big things right” (Fuller, 1996, p. 10). Lack of verification is a major cause of mistakes in news stories. The most common mistakes include spelling errors, inaccurate terms, errors of fact, errors in quotations (Friend, et al., 2000). Readers hate misspelt names or confused details in news stories and complain, demanding correction of these “relatively trivial” or “minor” errors (Frost, 2006, p. 272). Understanding of accuracy as precision of reporting was used, for

instance in the system of assessment of the quality of news writing developed by Speere (2002). In Speere's system mistakes in names and addresses are assigned the lowest possible scores.

But journalists are human and they are prone to human error "even by the most careful reporters" (Brooks, et al., 1988). People sometimes "goof" because of "brainlock" ("Chicago Tribune error policy," 2003). But most avoidable mistakes occur because of lack of attention, lack of verification, over-reliance on memory (McLellan, 2002), lack of knowledge, and time pressure. Lack of knowledge as a source of avoidable mistakes is not only typical for young reporters. In 1997, an experienced columnist at the *International Herald Tribune*, Dave Barry apologised in his column for a mistake he made in a previous issue, in which he wrote that Finland is also known as Norway: "I received a lot of letters stating that Finland is NOT also known as Norway ...They are two individual countries." An excellent collection of 44 types of mistakes in journalistic stories and ways to avoid them is posted on the website of Knight professor at Ohio University Frank Fee (Fee, n.d.).

However, mistakes in basic facts do not cause grave consequences or misunderstanding of news texts, and they can be corrected by printing a correction. Therefore, basic mistakes were allocated to the 'inappropriate' level of quality in the NTA, one level short of the 'unacceptable' mistakes.

### **Getting verifiable facts right**

Much graver — but also avoidable — mistakes can creep into news stories if journalists violate the procedural norm of accuracy as sticking to verifiable, undeniable facts (Morrison 2002) obtained from credible sources. Without credible, reliable and authoritative sources journalists will be getting "the dreaded 'so what' question" from news consumers (Ward, 2002, p. 47). Conventions of reporting assign the rank of the highest credibility to the highest possible authorities with direct knowledge of the issue. Unknown individuals seldom make the news. "What is said only becomes newsworthy in relation to who is saying it (Ward, 2002, p. 39).

After all, it makes a difference in credibility whether a statement about a cut in interest rates came from the Treasurer, the Shadow Treasurer, a prominent banker or your barber (Granato, 1991, p. 43)

Irrespective of the country where they work, journalists consider high-ranking officials, or VIPs, more authoritative and representative than average citizens (Bennett, Lawrence, & Livingston, 2007; Hall, et al., 1978; Manning, 2001). Becker (1967) explains what he labelled a "hierarchy of credibility" (p. 241) in that "those at the top have access to a more complete picture of what is going on than anyone else" while the inferiors' view "will be partial and distorted in consequence." Hall et al. (1978) include various state departments, leaders and

senior figures within the main political parties, established interest groups close to government, and law-enforcement bodies in the category of ‘powerful’ sources. These sources, the authors say, belong to the top of the hierarchy of credibility and thus shape news agendas.

Other sources may or may not be in authoritative positions, but can have authority due to their independence, relevance and competence in the specific area they are used for (Bickler, et al., 2004; Sessions, 2003). However, journalists often ignore such sources. Referring to the ‘Corngate’ scandal in New Zealand in 2000 in which corn from overseas — some genetically modified — was imported despite a ban on GM products, Sessions wrote that of 60 sources used by media to cover the story only one source was a truly independent competent scientist, while most of the others were politicians and industry and farming representatives. This may exactly fit the description of other than ‘powerful’ sources as ‘secondary’ in the understanding of Hall et al. (1978), but it does not help the audience to understand a non-political issue. By skewed and disproportionate choices of experts the media in the ‘Corngate’ scandal failed to verify the most controversial issue of this coverage — whether or not the results of a specific test, which was performed at the time, confirmed that the shipment was contaminated by GM products (Sessions, 2003). In another case, reporting about the Columbia space shuttle explosion that shook America in 2003, journalists created what Garner (2006) called “ignorance networks”. Reporters failed to locate sources representing different sides of the story and, while, as in the example cited above, they gave a lot of prominence to officials — elected and appointed government leaders and sources from NASA — they mostly ignored “dissenting opinions” of other primary sources (Sumpter & Garner, 2007). Thus they hardly interviewed contract workers who were directly responsible for building and maintaining the shuttle, astronauts, members of their families and investigators from outside NASA, thus giving news consumers an “incomplete account” that did not explain “*how the Columbia was lost*” (ibid, p. 470, italics in original). Therefore, Kovach & Rosenstiel put it straightforwardly: “Don’t rely on officials or news accounts. The primary sources are the best possible” (p. 89).

Literature has a variety of suggestions of how to identify the best possible source from simple descriptions to complex continuums of more and less credible sources. For instance, they can be described as “knowledgeable” and “connected to prestigious institutions”, “direct and articulate”, who “don’t overqualify statements” (Conrad, 1999, p. 285). This description, however, does not specifically point at the level of the ‘connectedness’ of the sources to the news, which is important to judge the credibility of the source. Frank Fee in his popular *44 Tips for greater accuracy* (Fee, n.d.) suggests that out of the hierarchy of possible sources reporters should automatically seek the one or two who are the best of all for the particular

story. If the best source is not available, the next best should be approached, but the reporters should be “sensitive to some of the risks inherent with less-than-top sources and employ some defenses” (ibid).

A complicated taxonomy of non-official sources was suggested by Manning (2001), who ranged sources on the continuum of the diversity of positions of sources between the insider and the far end of political marginalisation. His classification of 11 ways of defining the value of sources includes the sources’ amount of political and cultural capital, the degree of their ability to have a dialogue with the government, their conflict of interest, position in the hierarchy of credibility and the degree of access to the information needed by journalists. While this taxonomy is certainly useful for detailing in the learning materials for training news reporters, it is too detailed to help formulate the descriptors in the NTA except by being shortened to describing the sources as ‘primary’, ‘relevant’ and ‘competent’ as opposed to those lacking these qualities.

The failure to get to the best primary relevant competent source can result in failures of news reporting. One example of a major mistake occurred because of the lack of verification with the primary source and the failure to ‘employ some defenses’, as Fee’s suggests, coupled with deadline pressure. The story shocked the United States in January 2006. It was a developing story about a mining catastrophe in Sago, West Virginia, in which 13 miners were trapped in mine after a blast and were believed to be dead. The story started two days before the erroneous publication and was still in progress when suddenly the news broke from an Associated Press reporter that the miners were alive, not dead. Citing the local governor and miners’ families, with large headlines, many media outlets in the United States reported that that only 1 miner had died in the blast and 12 miners were alive. Families celebrated, churches bells rang. But a few hours after most newspapers went on sale, it became clear that only 1 miner remained alive and 12 miners had died. The problem was that the primary source — the mining company — did not confirm the initial report, and journalists rushed to get the happy news out and competed to be the first with information despite it not being properly verified. In the aftermath of the event Ben Hatfield, president and CEO of International Coal Group, which owns the Sago mine attributed the mistake to "a miscommunication" (Majors, Ward, & Scott, 2006):

He said that company officials received a report from a rescue team down in the mine that 12 miners had been found and were alive. Twenty minutes later, he said, they learned that initial report was wrong; that only one of the 12 was still alive. But someone in the command center at the mine site heard the report that 12 of the miners were alive and relayed it to family members at the church, prompting a joyous celebration (ibid).

One local newspaper — *Quad City Times* of Iowa — wrote: “We are troubled to learn that Associated Press and the governor of West Virginia used hearsay from stressed family members to confirm false information” (“Newspapers regret, and defend, mine rescue 'debacle',” 2006). Howard Kurtz, the Washington Post's media writer, blamed lack of verification and haste:

Sure, the bum information came from West Virginia's governor, and the coal company shamefully refused to correct the record for hours. But the fault lies with the journalists for not instinctively understanding that early, fragmentary information in times of crisis is often wrong. You don't broadcast or publish until it's absolutely nailed down, or at least you hedge the report six ways to Sunday. This was, quite simply, a media debacle, born of news organizations' feverish need to breathlessly report each development 30 seconds ahead of their competitors (“Newspapers regret, and defend, mine rescue 'debacle',” 2006).

Major avoidable mistakes such as happened in the Sago debacle have been allocated to the ‘unacceptable’ level of the NTA. The discussion above can be translated into the following descriptors for the NTA:

‘**unacceptable**’: story contains very serious factual errors

‘**inappropriate**’: story contains factual mistakes including confusing maths, wrong addresses, names and titles

‘**good**’: facts are verifiable and undeniable

‘**outstanding**’: story contains evidence that sensitive or error-prone or dubious facts have been double-checked

### **Getting all the facts in the story right**

The third part of the gradation in the notion of accuracy, getting everything right in a news story, is next to impossible. Citing the report by the Hutchins Commission dating back to 1947<sup>51</sup>, Kovach & Rosenstiel (2001) assert that news can be “factually correct but substantially untrue” (p. 43). Meticulously precise quoting of someone who is telling lies is not truthful reporting (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001; Mencher, 1994; Tully, 2008b) even if the source is a top politician. “Attribution says only: It is true that the source said this” (Mencher, 1994, p. 31) and Kovach & Rosenstiel add: “It is no longer enough to report the fact truthfully. It is now necessary to report the truth about the fact” (p. 43).

One vivid example of the controversy between getting facts right, or the precision of reporting, and reporting the truth about the fact is given by Kovach and Rosenstiel (2001): after visiting Vietnam in 1963, the then US Defense Secretary Robert McNamara told reporters that he was “greatly encouraged” with the “noteworthy” progress of the war, in which “South Vietnamese forces were taking an ever-greater role” while “Viet Cong

---

<sup>51</sup> Report of the Hutchins Commission, written by American academics, who researched the obligations of journalism (Bates, 1995)

casualties were increasing” (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001, p. 36). But he gave the opposite account of his trip to then President Lyndon Johnson: “Things were going to hell” and “Viet Cong reinforcements were outpacing Viet Cong casualties.”

McNamara lied during his press conferences... The press reported accurately what McNamara said in his press conferences, but did not get at the truth of what he knew (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001, p. 37).

The fact that McNamara lied emerged only nine years later (ibid). Harrower (2007) writes that politicians can be “honest and trustworthy”, but they can also “distort, duck and dodge the truth to advance their agendas”:

The best politicians are magicians, masters of illusion. So are their strategists and consultants. Even the nicest politicians lie by omission and spin everything (ibid, p. 107).

In another example the authors point at the same phenomena: something is revealed, but is it true? (Brooks, et al., 1988):

A presidential commission, after a year-long study, says there is no widespread hunger in America. Is the conclusion a fact? Or is the fact only that the commission said it? And how can you determine whether the commission is correct? (ibid, p. 21).

According to various dictionaries, fact is something that has actual existence as opposed to the supposition of something or a belief about something, or interpretation of the significance of something. The presidential commission’s statement being presented without supporting evidence proving that what is asserted actually exists, is therefore not a fact but only a claim or information. Mencher (1994) suggests that in cases of unsupported claims a journalist should verify the allegations by checking the facts rather than just reporting what was said or even balance a claim with a counterclaim:

When a minister (of religion) charged that a magazine in use in a public school system in California was Communist-inspired, a *Fresno Bee* reporter balanced the charge with a reply from school officials. But he also sought to verify the allegation by checking whether the publication had ever been listed as subversive. The reporter examined several publications that listed so-called subversive organizations and individuals. The magazine was not listed (Mencher, 1994, p. 33).

Therefore, absence of verification of facts and claims in news stories makes texts questionable and any unsupported, confusing or otherwise doubtful material that is provided without verification or a cue in the text that shows that the journalist made an effort to verify facts should be assessed as ‘inappropriate’. However, if a journalist has no way to check information, coming from a top policy-making official (see the example about McNamara lying to journalists above and the section ‘non-verifiable information’ below), then the quality level should be considered ‘appropriate’, because people should know what top officials have to say. Such claims should be verified in subsequent follow-up stories. However, the claim of a minister, if unproven, should be assessed at the ‘inappropriate’ level because they are not a

top policy-making official and need to prove their points with facts to make it of a publishable quality.

Uncritically citing information without referring to supporting evidence is a very common accuracy failure. Mencher (1994) writes that journalists “can determine that the statements were made, but ... cannot determine the truth of opinions and judgments” (ibid, p. 32). He gives a typical example of such writing: “The budget is too large (or too small)” (p. 32). Reporters can find other opinions on a controversial issue, but this is “balance, not verification” (ibid, p. 33). Reporters should do extra work and find a harder fact, Mencher writes. In this case such a fact could be the actual size of the budget and some base for comparison.

Some errors are unavoidable. They appear “when information changes or the source was wrong” (“Chicago Tribune error policy,” 2003). Lying by top officials that a journalist has no way of checking are also unavoidable (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001). Reporting riots or any other dangerous situations, or news on spread-out actions is also prone to unavoidable mistakes as they involve big masses of people, damage to property and sometimes deaths. Reporters cannot physically embrace the whole scale of the event, and, in addition, when violence is extreme, reporters can be restricted from free movement on the spot becoming dependent on other people’s accounts about the event (Danzger, 1975). Independent checking of official statements regarding military actions at war is also difficult (Mencher, 1994). Mencher suggests describing “the realities of combat” so that people can see that the versions clash.

Some sorts of information are very hard to verify. For instance, news about distant events is difficult to check for a local news organisation (“Chicago Tribune error policy,” 2003). However, as Rosenstiel put it, media should “make clear to media consumers what is and isn’t known” (“Newspapers regret, and defend, mine rescue 'debacle'," 2006). One popular formula that media use to show that some information is missing is ‘the claim could not be immediately verified.’

The following descriptors for the NTA can be formulated based on this analysis:

‘**inappropriate**’: story contains unsupported material that does not come from a top official

‘**acceptable**’: unsubstantiated statements by top officials are appended with explanation of why hard evidence is not provided

‘**good**’: all claims are supported by evidence

## **Wrongdoings**

Wrongdoings such as fabrications mean that a person is professionally unfit to be a journalist. Randall (2000), p. 192) equated fabrications with “sticking a wet hand in a light socket.” Fedler writes: “Fabrication is fiction, creating details, events or people that do not exist ... In fact, fabrication is so far beyond the bounds of normative journalism that it engenders no debate” (Fedler, 2005). Several journalists have been fired from their offices after it was found that they were involved in fabrications. They include Stephen Glass, Rick Bragg, Gerald Posner and Brian Ross. One instance of fabrications of facts and quotes that received a lot of publicity in 2003 is linked to the name of Jayson Blair, then a reporter of the *New York Times*, for which he was fired in 2003):

The reporter, Jayson Blair, 27, misled readers and Times colleagues with dispatches that purported to be from Maryland, Texas and other states, when often he was far away, in New York. He fabricated comments. He concocted scenes. He lifted material from other newspapers and wire services. He selected details from photographs to create the impression he had been somewhere or seen someone, when he had not. And he used these techniques to write falsely about emotionally charged moments in recent history, from the deadly sniper attacks in suburban Washington to the anguish of families grieving for loved ones killed in Iraq ("Times reporter who resigned leaves long trail of deception," 2003).

In seven months that Blair worked for the *New York Times* he falsified — made up facts and quotes — in half of the stories he wrote, as an investigation by the newspaper showed. Blair was fired, and two senior editors had to resign from the newspaper as a result. And despite Blair later being diagnosed with bipolar disorder which was used to explain his behaviour (Purse, 2010), he left a large black mark on the history of the credibility of the newspaper, what its editors labelled as a “profound betrayal of trust and a low point in the 152-year history of the newspaper” ("Times reporter who resigned leaves long trail of deception," 2003).

Fabrications are allocated to the ‘unacceptable’ level of quality in the ‘accuracy’ criterion.

### **Publication of controversial information**

Except for clear examples of mistakes, fabrications or presenting advertisements as news, there is a large grey zone in news journalism which always causes much discussions in media organisations’ and on professional websites before it is analysed in academic literature. Possible violation of laws and whether disclosures in the news media have been done in the public interest are the main controversies that media organisations have to deal with before they commit to the publication of such information. There are many matters that to various degrees involve balancing material that is sensitive and contentious material, but in the public interest. This research cannot analyse these issues in depth because of space constraints, but instead tries to represent the range of the issues and typical problems. Therefore, only a few vivid examples will be drawn upon in order to extract the descriptors for the NTA.



Public interest is part of many stories. For instance, in Britain such stories expose criminal or anti-social behaviour preventing people from being misled, dangers to public health and safety, and significant incompetence in public office (Frost, 2006). Invasion of privacy is one law that is commonly violated (Frost, 2006). However, despite it being a common problem, the understanding of privacy is so multifaceted (for the taxonomy see Solove, 2006) that even “courts and policymakers often have great difficulty in arriving at a coherent assessment of the various privacy problems and harms that they must address” (Solove, 2006, p. 559). Despite privacy generally being understood as control over when and by whom the various parts of us (our bodies, our voices, and the products of our bodies or objects very closely, mostly spatially, associated with us) can be sensed (seen, heard, touched, smelled or tasted) by others (Parker, 1974), every case in which violation of privacy may apply should be treated separately (ibid).

[O]ur understanding of privacy remains in a fog, and the law remains fragmented and inconsistent. Too many courts and policymakers struggle with even identifying the presence of a privacy problem. Protecting privacy requires careful balancing, as neither privacy nor its countervailing interests are absolute values. Unfortunately, due to conceptual confusion, courts and legislatures often fail to recognize privacy problems, and thus no balancing ever takes place (Solove, 2006, p. 558).

Frost warns that because of the complexity of the issue, care is needed before publishing stories that may be considered intruding into someone’s private life. Journalists and their editors should consider whether they are serving the public interest by such intrusion.

For instance, if the local paper found that a head teacher of a local primary school had unusual, but not illegal, religious convictions or sexual practices, then it might be appropriate to breach that person’s privacy in order to inform local parents who could then make up their own minds about sending their children to that school on the basis of an informed choice (Frost, 2006, p. 276).

What information can be reported from war and conflict zones is an extremely difficult judgment. Harding (2002) writes that when reporting from war zones, the laws of war overrule the demands of accuracy. The key criterion for deciding what to report and not to report is whether lives are being put at risk by giving operational details, precise locations and identifying individuals (Harding, 2002). For instance, any such operational details were carefully sorted out before publication in the *New York Times* on July 25, 2010, of material that was based on classified documents (Keller, 2010). The story revealed that while the United States hands over more than a \$1 billion a year to Pakistan to help combat the insurgents in Afghanistan, the Pakistan’s military intelligence agency ISI was in fact secretly guiding these militants (Mazzetti & Daragahi, 2005). The NYT took a month “to study the material, try to assess its value and credibility, weigh it against our own reporters’ experience of the war and against other sources, and then tell our readers what it all meant” (Keller, 2010).

[W]e took great care both to put the information in context and to excise anything that would put lives at risk or jeopardize ongoing military missions... Obviously we did not disclose the names of Afghans, except for public officials, who have cooperated with the war effort, either in our articles or in the selection of documents we posted on our own Web site. We did not disclose anything that would compromise intelligence-gathering methods. We erred, if at all, on the side of prudence. For example, when a document reported that a certain aircraft left a certain place at a certain time and arrived at another place at a certain time, we omitted those details on the off chance that an enemy could gain some small tactical advantage by knowing the response time of military aircraft (ibid).

This discussion can be translated into the following descriptors for the NTA:

**‘unacceptable’:** story violates laws except when it is in the public interest

This descriptor cannot work as a standalone one and should in practice be hyperlinked to its interpretations and examples so that journalism trainees are able to understand the concept and its application in news journalism.

### **Anonymous sources**

The use of anonymous sources has always been controversial with regard to the credibility of their information.

People allowed to say things without having to be responsible for them say things they wouldn't otherwise say. Misinformation, cheap shots — all is possible when no-one is accountable. We rob readers of their ability to judge what is said ... Finally, unnamed sources undermine confidence in candor and the value of sharing one's views and taking responsibility for them (The Washington Post's ombudsman Geneva Overholser as quoted in Scanlan, 2000a, p. 226).

Some media organisations forbid the use of such sources, but most use them despite public scepticism about such sources (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001) on the condition that the audience understands why the sources were not named. However, a “story that identifies its sources is a better piece of journalism, more complete and more credible, than the very same story pegged to unnamed sources ("AP reminds staff about policy," 2005).

In a survey of 419 newspaper editors conducted by the Associated Press and the Associated Press Managing Editors in 2005, 103 said that they never permitted the use of anonymous sources. Newspapers that allow them are mostly based in large cities, foreign bureaus or in Washington, where requests by sources for anonymity occur often. American newspapers have a specific issue with government officials giving briefings at which the source cannot be named. *Washington Post* editor Phil Bennett wrote, commenting on the survey: “In our better moments, we've declined to participate in 'background briefings' with government officials who have required anonymity while advocating official positions” (Bennett, 2005). The *New York Times* editor Bill Keller agreed: “It is patently silly for a Government spokesman, whose

job is to articulate official policy, to brief a room full of reporters anonymously” (Keller, 2005, p. 6).

Keller called the idea that a news organization can conduct “serious, aggressive journalistic inquiry” without anonymous sources a “fantasy” because many areas, especially involving “national security, intelligence or sensitive diplomacy, and stories that reflect dissent within governments, companies and other institutions” require that journalists protect their sources (Keller, 2005, p. 5). The classical example of the usefulness of anonymous sources — even if they are not quoted — is the Watergate scandal in which deputy CIA director Mark Felt was leaking information to *Washington Post* reporters. To report this information as credible, it was corroborated by other sources, and, the other way around, Felt confirmed information that had already been obtained and added his commentary (Scanlan, 2000a). However, cross-checking information from anonymous sources is not always possible in the daily routine, and many media organisations use them in news reporting “as a last resort” to obtain information that is newsworthy and comes from a reliable source who has direct knowledge of the subject. “The information should be of compelling interest, and unobtainable by other means” (Keller, 2005, p. 4).

Journalists should not aim to publish credible information at the expense of people’s lives. Betraying the confidence of anonymous sources, or ‘burning’ a source, is a deadly sin because revealing identity puts such sources at risk. They may be fired or arrested (Harrower, 2007), or even killed (Adams, 1998). Reporters should respect fears of ordinary people who are afraid to comment on the record if it may cost them a job or other problems and not tease out their names (Keeble, 1994).

This analysis shows that descriptors for the NTA should be formulated to the levels of quality lower than the ‘good’ level as such stories are less trustworthy; information from anonymous sources should be corroborated, and the publication should not endanger:

**‘acceptable’**: all facts and figures are consistent throughout the story and attributed to relevant sources; including anonymous if corroborated

**‘inappropriate’**: speculative comment of anonymous source is used: or anonymous source is used without corroboration; or without the effort to corroborate information

**‘unacceptable’**: story puts lives or work at risk

Allocation of the descriptors to a certain level of quality in this criterion was made on the basis of general guidelines specified in 1.4.3.5. The distinction between the ‘unacceptable’ and ‘inappropriate’ descriptors is in the level of the ‘badness’ of the performance. While the former descriptors are formulated to identify mistakes that may cause or caused serious consequences to people’s lives or society and deliberate wrongdoing including lies, the latter descriptors point at mistakes with less serious consequences, but still under the publishable

standards in quality media. The difference between the ‘acceptable’ and the ‘good’ levels of quality is in the level of the credibility of information: it is postulated a ‘good’ news story contains more credible and verifiable information, and comments are supported by evidence. The ‘outstanding’ level descriptor is formulated the way it can apply to controversial stories only because the requirement in the guidelines 1.4.3.5 suggests that only complicated stories are considered for this level and reporters should do some extra work to be eligible for the highest level of performance.

### 3.3.2. *Objectivity as a method*

The notion of objectivity in news reporting evolved greatly in the past century. In the 19th century and earlier news were often biased in favour of newspapers’ owners. But with the development of wire services which profited much more if they could sell news to more newspapers — including newspapers of various political convictions — the drive towards objectivity started (Siebert, 1956, cited in Boyer, 1981). In the 1920s media was undergoing a “striking...transformation of journalism from the nineteenth-century partisan press to the twentieth-century commercial-professional press” (Schudson, 1995, p. 9). At that time objectivity as a concept became powerful and the debate was waged for several decades on whether news journalism could be objective at all. In a survey conducted in 1974, 98 percent of journalists in the United States recognised that without objectivity there is no journalism (Phillips, 1977).

However, despite bias, the opposite of objectivity, being branded as one the “seven deadly sins” of journalists<sup>52</sup> (Harrower, 2007, p. 146), it is not simple to define what exactly objectivity is. It is called by some the “chief occupational value of American journalism” (Schudson, 2001, p. 149), or “one of the hallmarks of traditional journalism” (Willis, 1991, p. 53), but by some others as illusory (Boyer, 1981), “slippery” (Sessions, 2003, p. 45) or ‘illusory and flawed’ (Lee, 2004). Some authors and media organisations believe that ‘objectivity’ as a definition should be either abolished completely (see a list of opinions lower in this section), or replaced by such notions as ‘modern analytical and procedural fairness’ (Schudson, 2001, p. 161), ‘fairness’, ‘neutrality’, ‘detachment’, and ‘balance’ (Navasky, 2002), ‘impartiality’ (“Editorial guidelines. Impartiality & diversity of opinion,” 2005) or by ‘balance’ and ‘neutrality’ (Tucker, 2008).

---

<sup>52</sup>The other six include deception, conflict of interest, fabrication, theft, burning a source and plagiarism

Those who approve of the term ‘objectivity’<sup>53</sup> include a large variety of elements in the concept, which, if included in one criterion of the NTA would cause a lot of overlap of its elements. For example, (Boyer, 1981, p. 24) writes that most journalistic authors believe that objectivity for the “most part” is giving “‘both’ sides of issues, not ‘editorializing’, and being sure to attribute quotes so readers will know who said what.” The *Washington Post*’s style book quoted in Mencher (1994) includes completeness, relevancy, and the avoidance of loaded words. Morrison (2002) believes that objectivity is about reporting the what, where and who of something. Gans (1979) points out that due to objectivity journalists can choose news autonomously. Westerstahl (1983) considers accuracy and balance as subcomponents of objectivity. Among the other most popular elements of objectivity usually listed are fairness, neutrality, and emotional detachment (Boyer, 1981; Donsbach & Klett, 1993; Mencher, 1994; Navasky, 2002; Tucker, 2008). In practice, the notion of objectivity is even more multi-faceted. For example, fifty editors of American newspapers whom Boyer (1981) asked to define this notion came up with 26 different definitions, including that a story which an outsider would consider truthful is objective, or one which tells news without leaving out any important elements or one which gives facts without comment. Understanding of objectivity is also country-specific (Donsbach & Klett, 1993; Schudson, 2001). Sessions (2003), who effectively replicated the research by Boyer (1981) using New Zealand’s science reporters instead of American editors as interviewees, concluded that journalists practised three main attitudes to objectivity. She divided them into groups labelled ‘transmitters’, ‘the truth seekers’ and the ‘contextualisers’ (p. 167). The ‘transmitters’ were those who believe they should present facts without interpretation or analysis, the ‘truth seekers’ ensured that their sources’ claims are supported by sufficient evidence, the ‘contextualisers’ believed that they should present facts in a context that would help the readers to interpret them.

Kovach & Rosenstiel (2001, p. 72) attribute the confusion with the definition of objectivity to the fact that “the discipline of verification is so personal and so haphazardly communicated.”

Consider just a few opinions:

- “objectivity is impossible... undesirable and should not be treated as a positive performance norm (McQuail, 1992, p. 187)
- “since writing is as much an act of the unconscious as it is the conscious use of controlled and disciplined intelligence, the feelings of reporters can crop up now and then” (Mencher, 1994, p. 37)
- “who writes stories matters” (Schudson, 1995, p. 8)

---

<sup>53</sup> Objectivity as a notion is widely used in both academic and professional literature which was confirmed by a random check in journalistic publications including *Journalism*, *Journalism Studies*, and *Journalism Quarterly*.

- “there is no such thing as an objective observer of reality; all of us use our experiences, personalities, and knowledge to interpret what we see” (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996, p. 4)
- the notion of objectivity is “hopelessly naïve... no one ever achieved objective journalism, and no one ever could” because the observer’s bias, if not colouring the details, then at least determines the choice of them. “Almost nobody talks about objective reporting anymore” (Fuller, 1996, p. 14)
- “it should be clear that given the organisational pressures, selection processes and source strategies which contribute to news production, news can never be ‘objective’ in the sense of being uninfluenced by the processes that make it” (Manning, 2001, p. 68)
- “no sophisticated student of the press believes that objective journalism is possible. The best one can hope for is fairness, balance, neutrality, detachment (Navasky, 2002, p. xv)
- journalists are not robots devoid of emotions, values and opinions even if they do adopt the air of a detached bystander neutrally observing and reporting the world around them... reporting will always be influenced by the values of journalists who construct a reality shaped by linguistic, ideological, cultural, social, professional and organisational contexts. Knowledge is plural and heterogeneous: it is partial, located and contextually grounded (Tully, 2008b, p. 303, 304).

Most academics and practitioners of journalism agree now that bias is an irrevocable feature of journalism as a profession: people behind the journalistic stories (both sources and authors) and the circumstances that they work in are the sources of bias.

“Objectivity ... is at best a goal”, wrote Tully (2008b, p. 305). But other authors assert that in its modern understanding objectivity works as sets of professionally recognised rituals, methods, strategies, practices and routines of verifying information; and rules including ethical ones that help journalists to avoid slant and bias (Emery & Emery, 1996; Fuller, 1996; Golding & Elliott, 1979; Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001; Manning, 2001; March & Simon, 1967; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996; Tuchman, 1972). It is a “kind of industrial discipline” wrote Shudson (2001, p. 162).

Objectivity calls for journalists to develop a consistent method of testing information — a transparent approach to evidence — precisely so that personal and cultural biases do not undermine the accuracy of their work (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001, p. 72). Fuller (1996, p. 28) recognises that journalists “can discipline themselves to correct against bias and deal with each new situation with an open mind”. Donsbach and Klett (1993) found that 91 percent of American journalists, 83 percent of British, 81 percent of Italian and 81 percent of German journalists in his survey tried to be as objective as possible.

Taking into account the controversies surrounding objectivity some researchers advise against evaluating it. For instance, Hackett (1984) considers that it should be an object of research rather than an evaluative standard. McQuail (1992) reiterates that because objectivity is impossible to achieve it makes little sense to measure it. However, Schudson (2001) points

out the importance of seeking “publicly-appealing moral norms” to protect journalism “from criticism, embarrassment, or lawsuits, and to give them guidance in their work to prevent practices that would provoke criticism or even lawsuits, and to endow their occupation with an identity they can count as worthy” (ibid, p. 165). If the norms are established, their fulfilment can be evaluated. Schudson also writes that objectivity is an “observable pattern of news writing” (p. 149) and discloses some of the patterns that can be observed:

The objectivity norm guides journalists to separate facts from values and to report only the facts. Objective reporting is supposed to be cool, rather than emotional, in tone. Objective reporting takes pains to represent fairly each leading side in a political controversy. According to the objectivity norm, the journalist’s job consists of reporting something called ‘news’ without commenting on it, slanting it, or shaping its formulation in any way. The value of objectivity is upheld specifically against partisan journalism in which newspapers are the declared allies or agents of political parties and their reporting of news is an element of partisan struggle (Schudson, 2001, p. 150).

However, neither Schudson nor any other researcher to the best of our knowledge has come up with a thorough set of identifiable patterns of objective news writing or with gradations of quality in these patterns. The target of the further analysis is to create descriptors for ‘objectivity’ in the NTA, where they will be presented as observable patterns of news writing that could help identify not only just the evidence that objectivity as a consistent method of testing information was applied, but the extent to which it was utilised in news stories could be recognised. To do this, various descriptions relevant to objectivity mentioned in the literature will be examined and grouped according to their content.

Three points of difficulty need to be stated here: one about the strategy of allocating elements to certain criteria, and criteria to certain categories, the second point is that even very careful reporting using objectivity as a strategic ritual is prone to human error, and the third point is that a partisan reader will find fault with the most outstanding reporting. On the first note, some of the elements, which abovementioned authors consider belonging to objectivity will not be considered as elements of this criterion. For example, ‘accuracy’ has been singled out as a separate criterion in the same category because it has its own content. For the same reason ‘completeness’ as well as the ‘what, where and who of something’ have been singled out as the ‘comprehensiveness’ criterion in the same category (see section 3.3.3) and ‘relevancy’ became part of the ‘proximity’ criterion in the ‘Newsworthiness’ category (see section 3.2.3). The ‘use of loaded words’ element has a different problem. It may seem to belong to the ‘use of language’ criterion in the ‘Style’ category (section 3.5.3). However, as it is an element introducing judgement and, therefore, bias (Hayakawa, 1978), including in news stories (Lipari, 1996), it more logically belongs to the ‘Factual quality and credibility’ category because the core function of this category is to hold the criteria that have an impact

on trust in the information in news stories. The core function of the 'Style' category is to judge the understandableness, strength, political correctness and creativity of language.

The second point of difficulty is a reminder that it is not the absolute objectivity that will be assessed by the NTA, but its use as a method that can produce unavoidable mistakes. Like in sports, sometimes the angles referees take, or other obstacles do not let them make the most accurate judgement based on the real actions despite their doing everything correctly in accordance with the rules of the game (Brooks, et al., 1988). Each viewpoint may yield a different interpretation of what is occurring and of what it means. There is also, in journalism as in sport, the possibility of human error, even by the most careful reporters (ibid, p. 22).

Thirdly, the perception of news depends on the bias of news consumers, as discussed above, who may disagree with a story just because of the views they previously held, and not because journalists failed to adhere to professional standards (Stevenson & Greene, 1980).

Some people consider stories that contain viewpoints with which they disagree to be biased. So even a story that fairly and objectively presents both sides of a dispute may be considered biased by those members of the audience who disagree with the 'other' viewpoint. In other words, each side may think the story is biased towards the other side because of the tendency of people to insert their own biases into what they read, see and hear (Granato, 1991, p. 36).

This point is important for this research because it may explain why different coders who will be using the scoring rubric to assess news texts may give different judgments evaluating the same text for the use of objectivity as a method, because coders, like any other journalists or individuals, are not free of personal biases (consider the abovementioned 26 definitions of objectivity from 50 newspaper editors). Regretfully, such human bias cannot be taken into account by any assessment system that evaluates matters of social origin as opposed to determinant technical matters in which precise inputs cause only certain outputs.

In summary, the definition 'objectivity as a method' has been chosen to identify this complex criterion, because out of all other definitions it is the most clear, short and self-explainable. The significance of this criterion, described in this section, makes it — along with 'accuracy' another core criterion in the NTA.

Further in this section the descriptors for the NTA that would describe observable patterns in which the use of objectivity as a method can be identified in news stories will be discussed. The discussion will be divided in three parts. Firstly the elements that are easy to articulate through analysing statements in the literature will be represented in Table 8 with some explanations of why the descriptors were formulated in a particular way. Secondly, more extensive or complex patterns of the use of objectivity as a method that could be detected in news texts will be discussed at length and descriptors will be formulated at the end of each



smaller section. Thirdly, additional descriptors will be formulated, mainly to describe performances of exceptionally low quality which have been detected in news stories in the practice of training conducted by this researcher and which are rarely the case for news writing in western countries.

### 3.3.2.1. Uncontroversial elements of objectivity

**Table 8. Elements and descriptors for the criterion ‘Objectivity as a method’**

<i>Elements of the criterion</i>	<i>Quality statements made in literature, author</i>	<i>Elements of the descriptors in different levels of the NTA, explanations where needed</i>
Separation of facts and opinions	<p>Journalists need to separate facts from values and to report only the facts (Schudson, 2001)</p> <p>Facts should be separated from opinion in news stories (Boudana, 2010; DeFleur &amp; Dennis, 2002; Tully, 2008c)</p> <p>“The journalist who makes no judgments avoids being judged... It makes life easy.” (Morrison 2002)</p>	<p><b>‘good’</b>: facts and opinions are separated</p> <p><b>‘inappropriate’</b>: opinions are presented as facts; or journalist editorialises</p>
Reporting fairly all sides of the story	<p>Giving both sides of the issue of controversy (Bickler, et al., 2004; B. S. Brooks, et al., 1988; Buruma, 2006)</p> <p>“If you are writing about a conflict, make every effort to speak to both sides, and to find a non-aligned source for independent assessment” (Bickler, et al., 2004, p. 64)</p> <p>To present conflict fairly rely on the expertise of independent observers (Parks, 2006)</p> <p>Commit to covering both sides of an issue fairly. Try to present the facts of an issue, in addition to the conflicting opinions. Ask each side for facts, not just opinions (<i>Aren't I entitled to an opinion and a life?</i>, 2006).</p> <p>To be fair reporters should find every viewpoint on a story because often there will be more than two sides (Brooks, et al., 1988)</p> <p>Fairness is not a feature of any news report and it should be used in contentious stories “to matters that require fair play” (Mencher, 1994, p. 36)</p> <p>Objective reporting takes pains to represent fairly each leading side in a</p>	<p>Because of space limitations all sides cannot be approached for comment in news stories, so only all leading sides should be represented. Schudson (2002) referred only to political stories in regards to representation of the ‘leading sides’, but this demand could be equally applied to any controversy which is newsworthy enough to be publishable. Which sides are leading? If it is not obvious from the story, it should be additionally explained if chosen for training purposes</p> <p><b>‘good’</b>: in contentious stories all leading sides are represented</p> <p><b>‘outstanding’</b>: In contentious stories comments of all relevant parties are accompanied by comment of at least one independent competent expert</p>

	<p>political controversy (Schudson, 2001)</p> <p>It is important to be fair when representing sides to an argument (Morrison 2002)</p> <p>In reporting conflict, a range of choices and consequences should be presented and not just two irreconcilable positions (Parks, 2006)</p> <p>Talk to sources on all sides of a deal, dispute, negotiation or conflict ("Reuters handbook of journalism," 2008)</p> <p>Avoid one-source stories if they involve conflict. Reporters should always get comments from both or all sides of an issue (Rich, 2009)</p> <p>News stories have limits in space restricted by their importance and the attention span of the reader and it is unlikely that all sides of a contentious story can be given a chance despite the demand to be fair and approach all the sides of a contentious story: "newspapers and radio and television news bulletins are not glorified noticeboards on which people of all persuasions can simply pin up their viewpoints." (Granato, 1991, p. 37)</p>	
Right to reply to accusations	<p>Allow ample opportunity for response to anyone who is being attacked or whose integrity is being questioned in a story (Brooks, et al., 1988)</p> <p>Fairness requires that a reporter seeks the accused to reply on a serious accusation. The reply should be placed as <b>closely</b> to the allegation as possible (Mencher, 1994)</p> <p>"If there are two conflicting sides to a story, ensure where possible that the denials or challenges closely follow the accusation. Separating these by several paragraphs is one of the easiest ways to confuse the reader. It is also wasteful because distance between these two parts means you may have to recap the original claim." (Randall, 2000, p. 176)</p> <p>"When you are conducting an interview, if your source says something about another person, particularly if it is derogatory or controversial, make sure that you check with that other person. The first source's statements not only could be wrong, they could also be libellous. You</p>	<p>The use of the word 'serious' in the Mencher (1994) statement can pose complications: what is a 'serious' as opposed to 'not serious' or 'moderately serious' accusation? If the coders do not know the context, they cannot make this decision. Therefore, the word 'serious' will not be used in the 'inappropriate' descriptor. Fuller (1996) suggests that reporters should not take adversarial posture towards officials. But they should also not take such posture towards anyone else</p> <p><b>'good'</b>: in contentious stories all leading sides are represented high in the story and close to each other</p> <p><b>'inappropriate'</b>: story contains unchallenged</p>

	<p>should even check out written information about sources to make sure that it is accurate.” (Rich, 2009, p. 90)</p> <p>If a source is critical of someone else, reporters have a professional, ethical and often legal obligation to seek a response from that person for inclusion in the same story. Contacting them (or making efforts to contact them) for response after the story has appeared is not good enough. Giving people an opportunity to have a “right of reply” at the time a story critical of them is published is not only the decent thing to do, it may be particularly significant if the matter should go to court.” (Grundy, 2007, p. 25)</p>	allegations or accusations
Fairness, balance, partisanship, plagiarism	<p>Making no judgements on the basis of reporters’ own preferences instead of taking facts as they are and writing a story in such a way that the reader can make a rational judgement (Granato, 1991)</p> <p>Reporters should not take an “adversarial posture toward those in authority” thus unbalancing the stories (Fuller, 1996, p. 27)</p> <p>Part of fairness is to report what journalists failed to find out, or what they have not been told (Harding, 2002)</p> <p>Using personal prejudices is poor journalism (Morrison 2002)</p> <p>Journalists should not take sides. If they have an agenda, they should leave journalism (Harrower, 2007)</p> <p>Bias is one of the ‘seven deadly sins’ (Harrower, 2007, p. 146). The others are deception, conflict of interest, fabrication, theft, burning a source and plagiarism).</p> <p>Plagiarism, or copying someone else’s words without attribution, is the “cardinal sin” in journalism (Rich, 2009, p. 52)</p> <p>Plagiarism is one of seven deadly sins<sup>54</sup> (Harrower, 2007, p. 146), which are the “most loathsome, most shameful, most fatal to your credibility”. Plagiarism does not have to be an exact copy of someone’s work. If some words can be changed, but</p>	<p>If the journalist did not present some important comment, the quality of a news story suffers and it cannot be considered ‘good’. But if the story includes the explanation that such comments were sought, such a gap would not be the fault of the reporter, but of the source.</p> <p><b>‘acceptable’</b>: if some needed comments are missing, including on the controversy, story gives an explanation of it</p> <p><b>‘inappropriate’</b>: story is unbalanced or biased; or journalist editorialises</p> <p><b>‘unacceptable’</b>: story contains plagiarism; or story contains partisanship</p>

<sup>54</sup> The other six are deception, conflict of interest, fabrication, theft, burning a source and bias.

	<p>the ideas are the same, it is still plagiarism.</p> <p>Plagiarism is a form of deception (Lee, 2004)</p> <p>It is persistent. In three years after the Jayson Blair scandal ("Times reporter who resigned leaves long trail of deception," 2003), 39 new cases of plagiarism were detected in the US media, including four cases in the New York Times. Twenty-seven plagiarists were sacked or resigned, mostly those who reoffended (Fedler, 2005)</p> <p>Lifting exclusive materials (sources, case histories) from other news sources without attribution is "cannibalisation" (A. Phillips, 2010)</p>	
--	---	--

### 3.3.2.2. Should there always be a balance?

Despite many authors mentioning balance as an inherent element of objectivity as a method, what exactly objectivity entails is not always obvious and also it is not always clear whether and how it should be exercised even in the coverage of controversies. Some of the main disagreements are:

- to balance issues of contested public interest journalists should uncritically gravitate to the middle of the road (Zelizer, 2004) But Sommerville (1999) disagrees suggesting that the truth may not lie in the middle, but beyond one of the extremes that journalists present from the sides of controversies
- balance does not mean equal coverage of conflicting opinions but representation of opposing viewpoints (Ansley, 2003; Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001; Mencher, 1994). At the same time other authors note that reporting from conflict or war zones may mean providing equal coverage in time or inches to avoid accusations of partisan bias (Fico & Cote, 1999; Grade the news interview with Anna Badkhen, foreign correspondent for the San Francisco Chronicle," 2003)
- A balanced story would present both or all contradicting claims. However, some authors think that criminals do not have to be approached for comment.

The first contradiction is impossible to convert into a descriptor for the NTA because whether or not the proper extremes have been identified may not be observed from the story if a journalist did the job properly, but the story still turns out to be inaccurate when new knowledge appears.

### Should inches be balanced?

It is noteworthy that the discussion of whether everything should be counterbalanced is not resolved despite most authors pointing out that balancing does not mean that each side must

receive equal coverage but that news consumers should be informed what weight stands behind the conflicting claims and where the mainstream consensus lies (Ansley, 2003; Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001; Mencher, 1994). “A journalism of absolute balance can add up to zero. Balance is a moral commitment and cannot be measured by the stopwatch or the ruler” (Mencher, 1994, p. 36). The effort to equalise the number of quotes can even lead to distortion, write Kovach & Rosenstiel (2001):

If an overwhelming percentage of scientists, as an example, believe that global warming is a scientific fact, or that some medical treatment is clearly the safest, it is a disservice to citizens and truthfulness to create the impression that the scientific debate is equally split. Unfortunately, all too often journalistic balance is misconstrued to have this kind of almost mathematical meaning, as if a good story is one that has an equal number of quotes from two sides... And sometimes balancing them equally is not a true reflection of reality (ibid, p. 77).

But such understanding of balance may not work when journalists report from conflict and war zones. Anna Badkhen, reporter with the *San-Francisco Chronicle*, said in an interview in 2003 that people from the conflict zones sometimes count lines to accuse journalists of bias:

“Ms Badkhen dedicated X lines to Palestinians but only X lines to the Israelis.” Or vice versa. I never count how many lines I write about Palestinians and how many I write about Israelis, but apparently it’s something people should do when they write about that. And it has to be even, or else somebody will find bias in that” (“Grade the news interview with Anna Badkhen, foreign correspondent for the San Francisco Chronicle,” 2003).

Not only news consumers count lines. Calculation of column inches of story space was, for example, used as a measurement unit to assess partisan bias on the 1996 elections in the United States by Fico & Cote (1999).

This contradiction may be resolved by creating the following descriptors:

‘**good**’ level: ‘in contentious stories all sides are balanced where relevant’<sup>55</sup>

‘**inappropriate**’ level: ‘the story is unbalanced, or biased’

However, applying these descriptors would require professional judgement and, therefore, they are prone to disagreement.

### **Should Goebbels be approached for comment?**

After a book by Frank Rich, *Greatest Story Ever Sold*, was published in September 2006, one of its passages was cited by two prominent journalism authorities — and they disagreed. The disputed phrase by Rich goes:

A good reporter for an American paper must get sources who sound authoritative and quotes that show both sides of a story. His or her own expertise is almost irrelevant. If

---

<sup>55</sup> In the online NTA this descriptor will be hyperlinked to pretyped explanations in which typical situations of relevancy and irrelevancy of balance are described.

the opinions of columnists count for too much in the American press, the intelligence of reporters is institutionally underused. The problem is that there are not always two sides to a story. Someone reporting on the persecution of Jews in Germany in 1938 would not have added “balance” by quoting Joseph Goebbels. And besides, as Judith Miller found out, what is the good of quotes if they are based on false information? (quoted in a *New York Times* review (Buruma, 2006)).

“Let’s hope not,” agrees Scanlan, one of the leading trainers at the Poynter Institute of media studies in Florida, (Scanlan, 2006). But Laurel Leff, a journalism academic from the Northeastern University in the United States and the author of *Buried by the Times: The Holocaust and America’s Most Important Newspaper* disagrees. She wrote that providing balance was important even in such cases:

In fact, American journalists reporting from Germany in the 1930s worried about providing balance in news stories about German Jews. A 1935 journalism textbook actually used “the Jewish persecution by the German Nazi government” to illustrate the need for “both sides in a controversial matter” to be “given a chance to have their position stated.” Balance was necessary, the text explained, because the story is about a struggle “between rival groups, each of which is strong in its own right, and each of which is anxious to get as much propaganda across to newspaper readers as is possible” (Leff, 2006).

Scanlan, however, added another point:

The same twisted logic was on display two decades ago when I was reporting a series on tobacco injury litigation. One of the lawyers leading the fight against the tobacco companies complained about the habitual response of journalists reporting the health effects of tobacco; invariably they called industry spokesmen for their side. If you reported a heroin bust, he asked, would you call up the Mob for comment? (Scanlan, 2006).

Former director of news and English networks at the BBC Philip Harding (2002) put a dot above “i” in this debate by saying that ‘yes’, the ‘enemy’ side should be asked for a comment, even before the debate in the United States was unleashed. He criticised the then British international development secretary Clare Short who criticised the BBC correspondent John Simpson — who during the Balkan war dared to report from the Belgrade — capital of the country where ‘monstrous evil existed’. She equated Simpson’s interviewing in the streets of Belgrade to asking for a comment from Hitler during the WWII. Harding wrote:

This sort of comparison completely misses the point. The nature of communications has changed beyond all recognition in the last sixty years. Were the Second World War to be fought today, no matter what the BBC did, CNN and all the other leading news organisations across the world would be in Berlin from day one and broadcasting live. There would be a Nazi website... The days of controlling information and expecting the national media to behave differently from the international media are all but gone (Harding, 2002, p. 71-72).

Covering both sides is considered even by the warring sides. For instance, editors in Turkish and Greek media, from countries with no diplomatic relations involved in a long-standing conflict over Cyprus, believe that their reporters should seek more explanatory information on

the ‘other side’. This is not always practically possible, but there are ways to avoid direct contacts but still give both sides:

One practical way suggested by a Greek editor was ‘to include the other’s position in your question to your country’s politicians, and then write both the question and the answer in your newspaper. That of course means that you are in contact with sources in the other side, you read their positions and you are willing to question your government’ (Ozgunes, 2000, p. 419).

In summary, this dispute did not contribute to any changes in general approach to reporting on contentious issues. Apparently, using objectivity as a method has its limits, which will depend on the situation. What is important, is the ability of a reporter to use a variety of tools in different situations with knowledge of the rules and anticipation of the possible consequences. Therefore, ‘where relevant’ should be used in the descriptor for the ‘good’ level of quality:

‘**good**’: in contentious stories all sides are balanced, where relevant<sup>56</sup>

‘**inappropriate**’: story is one-sided on a contentious issue

### **Failure of objectivity as a method**

The two previous sections can be described as concerned with reporting within the framework of “spheres of legitimate controversy” (Hallin, 1986, p. 116), in which reporters exercise objectivity and balance. Clearly such a framework is utilised not only in times of stability, but also, as the examples above suggest, during times of war and conflict in other countries. But when it comes to tragedy, public danger and threats to national security, journalists “instinctively and willingly abandon the effort to report from a neutral stance” even in the fatherland of objectivity, the United States (Schudson, 2002, p. 41). Berkowitz (2006) justified the loss of objectivity asking rhetorically how objective news can be when a country is under threat. Hallin labelled such a framework around reporting as the “sphere of consensus” (p. 117). For example, when mainland USA came under attack on September 11, 2001, dissenting voices were silenced, and those making “comments interpreted as critical of the US or any of its statements often come under ferocious attack” (Brennen & Duffy, 2003, p. 11). Questioning official policy started to be confused with disloyalty (Navasky, 2002). Schudson (2002) wrote that “in tragedy, public danger, and threats to national security, there are no ‘sides’. We are all in it together” (p. 41).

Neither deferential objectivity not tough, assertive professionalism, modes appropriate to covering legitimate controversies, seemed adequate to the moment. Journalism as an instrument of providing information and analysis of public affairs did not seem enough. And so journalists shifted modes as if changing to another

---

<sup>56</sup> In the online NTA this descriptor will be hyperlinked to pretyped explanations in which the spheres of legitimate controversies and of consensus are described.

musical key or switching to a different language. They moved toward the sphere of consensus. They moved into what might even be called a priestly or pastoral mode. The tone of detached neutrality was replaced by a quiet, solemn tone, as if speaking at a funeral... Criticism of the short-sightedness of national leadership was, at most, muted. Journalists were not out to find scapegoats. It was just not appropriate at a time of national mourning (Schudson, 2002, p. 40).

However, this period was rather short-lived. By the end of September “the unquestioning ‘we’ began to dissolve” (Schudson, 2002, p. 43) and reporting got back to normal. Schudson wrote about the *New York Times*’ issue of Sept. 28:

Democrats and Republicans were arguing with each other in Congress... Journalists were on Mayor Giuliani’s back... Manhattan residents were bitching at the city bureaucracy... It was wonderful to see all that messiness again (Schudson, 2002, p. 45).

Such a pattern of coverage of the tragedy and its aftermath can be projected on reporting on wars and armed conflicts that many journalists in post-Communist countries live through and have to report on. War apparently falls into the category of the threat to national security in the Hallin (1986) classification. According to the logic of his classification, journalists may abandon neutrality and objectivity while reporting on a war in their own country. The question is – for how long? Hallin writes that during the whole of the World War II reporting was considered one of the state’s weapons. In the Korean War reporters also did not dare to criticise troops. Things changed closer to the end of the war in Vietnam: only “in Vietnam, and then rather late in the war, did ‘our war’ become ‘the war’” (p. 177). The war in Iraq followed nearly the same pattern with criticism of the war appearing soon after it started. Certainly Hallin did not see such a period as desirable when describing that it took place. But it was Hallin’s logic that was used by Schudson (2002) who justified the need for some period when journalists ought to provide comfort and reassurance to the nation. The question is then: how far and how long could journalists step outside social expectations in certain critical moments. There is no clear answer to this question.

The issue is complicated by objectivity as a norm apparently failing in some peculiar instances of news reporting which are outside the scope of this research: for instance, when reporting news from abroad on news which is ‘theirs’, journalists rely on professional standards, but if news is ‘ours’, then journalists’ routines “become subordinate to national loyalty” (Nossek, 2004). The period when journalists, traumatised along with their nation by some serious crisis or war, when they lose relatives, may extend for a long time – as happened in frozen conflicts around the globe (for instance, in Sri Lanka or in Azerbaijan). Local journalists in such countries are often criticised by international media watchdogs for reporting on ‘our war’ and not ‘the war’, but at the same time international agencies or foreign media organisations which often use local journalists as stringers, report on both sides of the conflict. Apparently, when the practicalities of journalism come under political and



social pressures and the lives of local reporters along with the business of local media organisation are at stake<sup>57</sup>, journalism cannot simply rely on the norms of the profession. However, the constraints of the NTA cannot take into account all the exceptions from the norm, but only acknowledge that the refusal from using objectivity as a method is sometimes necessary.

Analysis in this section can be translated into the following descriptor:

**‘inappropriate’**: story is unbalanced without justification<sup>58</sup>

### 3.3.2.3. Judgmental language

Neutral language is considered to be a virtue in news stories. Objective reporting should be marked by affectless recitation of facts and contain no emotional attachments, reporters’ perceptions, feelings or opinions colouring texts (DeFleur & Dennis, 2002; Fuller, 1996; Schudson, 2001).

A good reporter should be able to write about a contentious debate without either side being able to discern the reporter’s views on the issue (*Aren’t I entitled to an opinion and a life?*, 2006).

#### Using adjectives

However, novice reporters often fail to deliver news without showing their emotions and attitudes. One way in which reporters fail to exercise neutral language is by using adjectives (Granato, 1991) which “tell your reader what you think about a noun and therefore what they should think about it” (p. 43). Granato refers to an example when an author’s personal opinion of a “lovable, long-haired, soppy-eyed dog” was foisted on the readers, when the noun ‘spaniel’ could suffice and the readers could have had their own descriptions of this dog (p. 43). Personalised adjectives should not be used even when a reporter is “outraged by cheats, swindles and injustices”: “Instead, they [reporters should] put the facts before the public and hope that readers will take umbrage and demand reform” (Granato, 1991, p. 44). Mencher (1995) gives an example of how by describing a source or a character in a story a reporter may express the journalist’s own feelings or attitudes by the choice of adjective. In

---

<sup>57</sup> In the pilot experiment that did not become part of this thesis for space reasons, I was asked by the management of the Agency in which the experiment was conducted, not to pressure the reporters to use information from the ‘other side’ (Azerbaijan is involved in a 16-year old conflict for its region Nagorny Karabakh with neighbouring Armenia which occupied it after a short war in 1994. “I need my reporters to be alive and the Agency to keep going, and there are many militants around, you should understand this,” I was told when I conducted an online forum on reporting conflict. However, slowly the Agency started to use the ‘other side’, using information published by international agencies or explained by independent, mostly foreign, experts.

<sup>58</sup> In the online NTA this descriptor will be hyperlinked to pretyped explanations in which the spheres of legitimate controversies and of consensus are described.

one instance, a reporter may refer to “an ambitious young politician” — an adjective that can have a “negative connotation” is used to describe a politician — if a source is disliked, or to a “dynamic young state controller” — an adjective that creates an image of a person working hard to serve the public — if a source is admired. “The reporter’s job is to let the reader draw conclusions by describing what the politician says and does”, writes Mencher (p. 37). He also writes that “similes and metaphors can cause trouble” by allowing the reporter “to inject his or her feelings into a piece” (p. 38).

Not all adjectives are loaded. Value judgements by a reporter are acceptable only in a few cases — mostly when hardly anyone will dispute it. For instance, “describing a ‘blue’ singlet is no great sin against objectivity” (Granato, 1991, p. 43). Another example is the use of the adjective “unpopular” in an article by an AFP reporter on Oct. 10, 2009: “Obama gathered his top political, military, and security aides in the secure Situation Room of the White House for the fourth in a series of in-depth consultations on rescuing the US mission in the *unpopular*<sup>59</sup> eight-year war”. Hardly anyone could argue that this war was not popular.

This analysis can be translated into the following NTA descriptor:

**‘inappropriate’:** stance adverbs are used to import value judgements or foster preferred interpretations

### **Using pejorative, loaded and stigmatising words**

Media play a central role in the creation of “deviant identities” and in “stigmatisation and demonisation of whole groups of individuals” (Ferrell, 2004, p. 109) The ‘stigmatised’ are those, “whose transgressions may scarcely border on illegality, whose actions and behaviours are criminalised on the basis of some failure to conform to the ‘proper way of doing things’ — dole scroungers, drug addicts, immigrants and asylum seekers, homosexuals, single mothers and feckless fathers (Ferrell, 2004, p. 111). Stereotypes and generalisations “must be avoided” in covering diverse communities because they “fuel prejudice and keep superficial the level of debate and analysis.” (Tully, 2008c, p. 238). For example, Filipino women are often presented in way that this ethnic community considers “misleading and offensive”: “mail-order brides”, “meek, docile slaves, oriental beauties with shady pasts, passive and manipulable, but also grasping and predatory, using marriage to jump immigration queues” (Robinson, 1996, p. 54). Tully recommends not to refer to a gay, or a lesbian as an “admitted”, “acknowledged”, “practising” or “openly” gay (ibid, p. 239). He also points out that people with disabilities dislike seeing themselves as tragic figures in journalistic stories. Lo Tempio (2006) adds that such emotionally charged words as “suffers from”, “afflicted

---

<sup>59</sup> Emphasis added

with” and “victim” referring to people with disabilities should not be used and recommends to emphasise the person and not the disability (“woman with diabetes” and not “diabetic”).

Another group of words has a slightly less charged character, but still worthy of being taken into account — perhaps if not for the NTA, then for the instructional modules in the SET. For example, the *Washington Post* style book quoted in Mencher (1994) advises against using such “subtly pejorative words” as ‘refused’, ‘despite’, ‘admit’ and ‘massive’ in cases when they may be misleading or deceiving the reader. Morrison (2002) warns against using such value-laden words as “foolish” or “short-sighted.”

These suggestions can be translated into the following NTA descriptor:

**‘inappropriate’:** pejorative words are used; or stereotypes are used that stigmatise minorities

### Using labels

Labelling descriptions are another way to foster preferred interpretations. Such descriptions, or tags, or “shorthand devices” (Richardson & Barkho, 2009) are widely used to briefly describe people, issues, actions and agendas. Some tags are simply factual and serve to reduce the description of the subject, saving space in news stories. For example ‘9-11’ is a shorthand label for the tragedy in New York in which two towers of the World Trade Center collapsed after the attack by two planes masterminded by Al-Qaeda. However, some descriptions are value-laden and thus controversial. Such a problem is especially acute for journalists in transitional and developing countries where conflicts including ethnic, religious, racial and political are often unresolved and cautiousness in the use of potentially value-laden language is very important. For example, reporting about the long-standing Israel-Palestine conflict journalists often refer to the ‘occupied territories’, which audiences struggle to comprehend (Philo & Berry, 2004). Issues related to the coverage of this conflict are so sensitive that a kind of “the Middle East Culture” has been effectively created in the BBC that makes journalists and editors “to watch every single word they write and broadcast” while the question of which word — if they appear to be of a “loaded or sensitive” type — to use sometimes go even to the highest levels of the corporation’s hierarchy (ibid, p. 619). Journalists should be cautious in labelling (Boudana, 2010) as it may be also used to discredit “the opinions of individuals opposed to government or corporate actions, by affixing a label that classifies them as outside the country’s mainstream” (Lee & Solomon, 1990, p. 202). The authors cited an example of two farmer brothers, one of which used chemicals to fertilise fields was labelled as ‘traditional’ in contrast to his brother who used organic methods, suggesting the organic farmer was outside the mainstream and thus inappropriate. Tully (2008, p. 239) recommends avoiding labels like “activist”, “radical” or “moderate”, “because

labels are subjective, often misleading, reinforce prejudices and can undermine the credibility of the person or group quoted.”

In a curious twist, another instance is an absence of the needed shorthand tag. For example, a heated discussion in the United States’ media in summer 2010 was caused by the absence of the one-word label for waterboarding. For decades prior to the revelation in 2004 of the use of this technique by American military, it was labelled as ‘torture’ — but not after. According to a study conducted by Harvard University students, the *New York Times* labelled waterboarding as torture in 44 of the 54 articles that mentioned it from 1931 to 1999 and only in two of 143 articles from 2002 to 2008 (Desai, Pineda, Runquist, & Fusunyan, 2010). The newspaper standards editor Phil Corbett did not explain the reason for the obvious change of tack, but was quoted as saying that the *New York Times* had no official rule on when or how to use the word torture (Stelter, 2010): “In general, when writing about disputed, contentious and politically loaded topics, we try to be precise, accurate and as neutral as possible; factual descriptions are often better than shorthand labels” (ibid). But the critics disagree, accusing the Times of taking a side. One critic, Greg Sargent — editor of the US-based publications Election Central, Talking Points Memo’s politics and elections web site — was quoted by Stelter (2010) as saying:

The decision to refrain from calling waterboarding ‘torture’ is tantamount to siding with the Bush administration’s claim that the act it acknowledged doing is not illegal under any statute... No one is saying The Times should have adopted the role of judge and jury and proclaimed the Bush administration officially guilty. Rather, the point is that by dropping use of the word ‘torture,’ it took the Bush position — against those who argued that the act Bush officials sanctioned is already agreed upon as illegal under the law.

Such heated discussions of the use or non-use of loaded shorthand labels means that there is no one or even simple answer to this questions, and each media takes such decisions with the full understanding of the simultaneous responsibilities and ramifications. One suggestion of how to cope with the issue of the use of such loaded word as ‘torture’ comes from the *Washington Post*, whose national security editor Cameron Barr was quoted by Stelter (2010):

After the use of the term ‘torture’ became contentious, we decided that we wouldn’t use it in our voice to describe waterboarding and other harsh interrogation techniques authorized by the Bush administration. But we often cited others describing waterboarding as torture in stories that mentioned the technique... We gave prominence to stories reporting official determinations that waterboarding or other techniques constituted torture.

Interpreting this debate for the creation of descriptors for the scoring rubric is as complex as the issue itself, especially as the descriptors needs to be generalised to cover similar incidents. However, it is clear that in the centre of the debate is not the use of a loaded tag, but its use as a voice of the author of the story. In both abovementioned instances, which do not cover all

the possible variants of the use of loaded tags but just illuminate two specific uses, the use of these shorthand devices would not be criticised if they had been used as part of a quote coming from an authoritative source. This leads to the articulation of the descriptor for the ‘unacceptable’ level of performance, as ‘labelling descriptions that may be politically, ethnically or religiously or otherwise offensive are used as part of the reporter’s voice.’ However, this does not seem sufficient, because it may allow inexperienced reporters to use such tags in quotations coming from insufficiently authoritative sources. Therefore, the descriptor could be modified as (change italicised): ‘labelling descriptions that may be politically, ethnically or religiously or otherwise offensive are used outside *a quote from authoritative source*.

### **Using stance adverbs**

The second technique of fostering preferred interpretations which is inappropriate in news journalism is using stance adverbs, or framing devices, or “an overt, metalinguistic comment” aimed at preempting audiences’ interpretation of a message in media (Powell, 1992, p. 75). Analysis of journalistic texts by Lipari (1996) shows that stance adverbs such as ‘obviously’, ‘clearly’, ‘apparently’ and ‘presumably’ successfully operate as a strategy “to augment or diminish the legitimacy of knowledge claims, masquerade as evidence, and steer readers toward a preferred interpretation of the news” (p. 821) and undermine credibility. Labelling descriptions and loaded words can also be used by journalists as “key to manipulation” (Lee & Solomon, 1990, p. 13) pursuing some political target or succumbing to the demands of the country’s political leadership. For example, the description ‘deterrent’ is used only in connection with nuclear weapons pointed from the US to the Soviet Union, while similar weapons pointed the other way around “never net the US media’s ‘deterrent’ tag (Lee & Solomon, 1990, p. 11), or the word ‘terrorism’ is applied selectively to mean bombings, assassinations and kidnappings by Arabs, but not if done by Israelis. The manipulative use of words will be allocated in the ‘unacceptable’ level of quality.

The analysis in this section can be translated in the following descriptor for the NTA:

**‘unacceptable’:** opinions are presented as facts; or hyped emotions are present; or adjectives, pejorative or loaded words or stance adverbs are used to import value judgements or foster preferred interpretations; or labelling descriptions that may be politically, ethnically or religiously or otherwise offensive are used outside a quote from authoritative source; or stereotypes are used that stigmatise minorities

### **3.3.2.4. Propaganda**

One particular element which is a widely used tool of bias in countries with authoritarian or semi-authoritarian rule (which is the case in most post-USSR countries excluding the Baltic states), is propaganda. Propaganda is usually viewed as the “manipulation of opinion toward

political, religious, or military ends” (Black, 1977). Black suggested a list of what should be included in this notion:

- a heavy or undue reliance on authority figures and spokesmen, rather than empirical validation, to establish its truth or conclusions
- the utilisation of unverified and perhaps unverifiable abstract nouns, adjectives, and adverbs, rather than empirical validation, to establish its truths, conclusions, or impressions
- a finalistic and fixed view of people, institutions, and situations, divided into broad, all-inclusive categories of in-groups and out-groups (friends and enemies), situations to be accepted or rejected in whole
- a reduction of situations into readily identifiable cause-effect relationships, ignoring multiple causality
- a time perspective characterised by an under- or over-emphasis on the past, present, or future as disconnected periods, rather than a demonstrated consciousness of time flow
- a greater emphasis on conflict than on cooperation among people, institutions, and situations (ibid, p. 102).

Black suggests that if journalists are repeatedly following such patterns of behaviour, they can be considered as propagandists even if they are doing it “UNCONSCIOUSLY” (p. 102, emphasis in original). “It may well be that their view of the world is such that their work habitually follows propagandistic patterns. But this doesn’t excuse them” (ibid). The notion of propaganda suggested by Black describes well the unwanted and, as he described it, “irresponsible” (p. 93) patterns of journalists’ behaviours. However, it is impossible to include all of these descriptions in the NTA for space reasons. In addition, the set of these descriptions is broad and some of them are milder in the level of their offence than the usual understanding of propaganda. For instance, the ‘heavy or undue reliance on authority figures’ element in this research is accounted for in the ‘inappropriate’ quality level of the ‘reporter’s voice’ criterion of the ‘Style’ category. The ‘utilisation of unverified and perhaps unverifiable abstract nouns, adjectives’ description is accounted for in the ‘accuracy’ criterion’s ‘inappropriate’ quality level as ‘story contains unsupported material that does not come from a top official’. The patterns for the third description are hard to identify in individual texts, but such instances could serve as an element of performance appraisal of a news reporter in which more than the quality of news writing is assessed. Ignoring multiple causality and simplifying news stories cannot even be considered an offence as no story can take into account all the possible causes for news occurrences. However, ignoring obvious reasons should be considered unacceptable. This element is accounted for in the ‘explanations’ criterion of the ‘Meaning’ category as ‘no explanations of why news happened? how did it happen? what happens next? are provided which makes it hard or impossible to grasp news.’ The fifth description is a rare situation which, perhaps, can be accounted for as an imbalance

in the story. The last description is accounted for in the ‘objectivity as a method’ criterion. However, it is placed not in the ‘unacceptable’ level of quality, as the ‘propaganda’ descriptor is but in the ‘acceptable’ level, because emphasising conflict is newsworthy (see section 3.2.6).

### **3.3.2.5. Other descriptors in the ‘inappropriate’ and ‘unacceptable’ levels of performance**

A particular tool that sometimes creeps into news reports by journalists in post-Communist countries is writing in the first person. Randall (2000) points out that reporters covering “big stories” are particularly prone to this temptation “perhaps feeling that some of the importance of the story has rubbed off on them” (p. 201). Others who use ‘I’ in reporting news “believe that their reactions to a story, their emotions, their doings, are so fascinating that they should be frequently included” (ibid). But it is not a reporter who is news, but what they saw or found out. “Unless you are a big name journalist whose stock-in-trade is personal reporting” news reporters should not “exercise in informative vanity” (ibid).

Some elements of journalism that are typical for journalists in poor countries are not addressed much in journalistic literature. For example, experience of this researcher in training journalists in post-USSR countries shows that often journalists not only write in the first person and use their opinions, but also, boast, lecture or patronise. These descriptors have been added to the ‘inappropriate’ level of performance because they are not offences, for which in some media a reporter may be fired (as is the quality of performance in the ‘unacceptable’ level), but nevertheless are not appropriate.

As for the level of the sackable offence in news writing, some of them are rare in western countries and, therefore, are rarely represented in western educational literature. However, the NTA is created for journalists in post-authoritarian countries and such instances must be made part of the lowest level of performance. For example, such an offence as publishing paid-for stories known as *zakazukha* in Russian. *Zakazukha* is a multimillion-dollar industry involving nearly every publication in the country, according to a Moscow-based monitoring agency Lobbynet (Startseva, 2001). Yuliana Slaschova, co-chairwoman of the American Chamber of Commerce's marketing committee, was quoted by Startseva in her story *Russian journalism's dirty little secret* as saying a popular daily news broadsheet *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, the champion of *zakazukha* in Russia made about US\$20,000 a month off the paid-for news content:

We took one issue of *Komsomolskaya Pravda* and put green stickers on every paid article so our client could see how commonplace it is. By the time we were done the paper was as green as a tree — up to 70 percent of all the information in the paper was bought (Startseva, 2001).

In an ironic twist, while stories are not paid for in western countries, the practice of western governments placing *zakazukha* in the media of developing and transitional countries is not unheard of. This researcher witnessed many stories in newspapers of Central Asia which were paid for by western non-governmental organisations who were promoting their work. And in one instance the United States military was blamed for covertly paying for placing stories in the Iraqi press during the war that started in 2003:

As part of an information offensive in Iraq, the U.S. military is secretly paying Iraqi newspapers to publish stories written by American troops in an effort to burnish the image of the U.S. mission in Iraq (Mazzetti & Daragahi, 2005).

The stories planted into the Iraqi media promoted the successes of US and Iraqi troops against insurgents, US-led efforts to rebuild Iraq, and rising anti-insurgent sentiment among the Iraqi people. Senator Edward M. Kennedy protested such a practice calling it “a devious scheme to place favourable propaganda in Iraqi newspapers” (White & Graham, 2005).

While it is often clear from news stories that they are *zakazukha* or advertisement posing as news, it is sometimes hard to apply such a descriptor for obvious reasons: no trainer or coder would have evidence that the money was paid. Therefore, the descriptor should be formulated the following way: ‘story looks like it may have been paid for’. Another way of coding this phenomenon is to apply the descriptor ‘story contains advertisement or promotion’, which is easily identified if the story clearly favours something or someone. For the example of such a story see story 10 in Appendix 1.

But while in most non-western countries such news is easy to recognise, in western countries they may be done more skilfully. In 2005, the *New York Times* revealed that \$254 million was spent in the first four years of George W. Bush administration on contracts with PR firms that were creating fake news clips for local television stations. The “counterfeit news” was run by TV channels “without any hint of where they came from”, and looked so “much like the real thing” that “only sophisticated viewers can easily recognise that these videos are actually unpaid commercial announcements for the White House or some other part of the government” (“And now, the counterfeit news,” 2005). The editorial in the NYT concluded:

If using pretend news is one of the ways these stations have chosen to save money, it's a false economy. If it represents a political decision to support President Bush, it will eventually backfire. This kind of practice cheapens the real commodity that television stations have to sell during their news hours: their credibility (ibid).

Among other important descriptions of ‘unacceptable’ quality of news writing is ‘story contains manipulation’, ‘ethical rules are violated without addressing the issue’ and ‘no imposed censorship is mentioned’. These descriptors are added based on the experience of this researcher. The last of these descriptions is difficult to identify, and it becomes clear only



in the communication with journalists after the ‘story contains advertisement’ descriptor is used for assessment.

For reasons of space the descriptor ‘adjectives, pejorative or loaded words or stance adverbs are used to import value judgments or foster preferred interpretations’ was shortened to just ‘loaded words’.

### 3.3.3. *Comprehensiveness*

“To seek truth and report it as fully as possible” (Steele, 2000), is one of the guiding principles of journalism. The ‘fullness’ of news is needed for the public to make informed judgments (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001; Rich, 1981). Therefore, the ‘comprehensiveness’ criterion was considered for the NTA to assess the completeness of the factual information in a news report. First of all, it should include the staples of any news report: the what, who, where and when news happened. Secondly, it should include all the important information needed to understand the essence of news but not omit facts of major importance and not include irrelevant information at the expense of significant facts (Washington Post style book quoted in Mencher, 1994; Rich, 1981).

Covering the staples of a news story includes only the main answers to the 4W’s questions while in theory many more questions may be raised that start with ‘who’ and ‘what’. For instance, the ‘who’ question could include the following variety:

- Who’s involved?
- Who’s affected?
- Who’s going to benefit?
- Who’s getting screwed? (Harrower, 2007, p. 36)

Scanlan (2000, p. 119) gives an even more extended list of the ‘who’ questions:

- Who is involved?
- Who is affected?
- Who are the stakeholders?
- Who are the major players?
- Who supports the issue?
- Who opposes it?
- Who is close to the action?
- Why typifies the situation?
- Who are the most knowledgeable sources?

For the ‘what’, ‘when’, and ‘where’ part Scanlan gives the following list (ibid, p. 120):

- What are the forces to support? In opposition?

- What's going on?
- What happened?
- What are the key moments?
- When did the story begin?
- When did it end?
- When did the key moments occur?
- Where is this story taking place?
- Where is the main action or event happening?

All these issues are legitimate to be covered in a news story. However, all of them do not necessarily clarify the main news point and therefore they are not part of the factual core of news stories which is usually located at the top of the 'inverted pyramid'. Some of these questions form the analytical dimension of a news story. Therefore, for the 'comprehensiveness' criterion, as opposed to the 'in-depth' criterion, only more straightforward issues will be covered in the NTA, which means that the answer to the 'what' question means that 'what has happened' is clear. The answer to the 'where' question means the place where news happened is specified. The answer to the 'when' question means that the time when news happened is given. Not to overlap with the 'timeliness' criterion, the 'when' element of the 'comprehensiveness' criterion does not assess whether the news is timely but only assesses whether the time when news happened is part of the story.

Another element of completeness may be using examples and anecdotes in news stories that help make them "more interesting, personalize them and help audience members understand them more easily" (Fedler, Bender, Davenport, & Drager, 2005, p. 119). Anecdotes are a powerful instrument for getting the attention of a news audience, bringing a personal dimension, providing the fullest possible insight and illustrating the tug of different viewpoints (Craig, 2003).

Omissions, on the other hand, reduce the impact a news story may have on the public:

If a popular article reports that a new drug seems to cure some disease but fails to mention its severe side effects, we would not view the article as a sufficiently comprehensive representation of the drug's effects. To represent reality fully, a message must address all dimensions of a topic that readers expect to learn about (Rowan, 1989, p. 165).

Despite some authors considering the completeness of a news reports to be a function of accuracy, the "issue of covering all significant matters is more of an issue of the completeness or comprehensiveness of journalistic accounts of science, rather than one of accuracy" (Pellechia, 1997, p. 51). However, the degree of the comprehensiveness of news reports is a controversial issue. While comprehensiveness in news is important, its understanding is subjective (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001). "The debate over what is adequate and inadequate

coverage will never be resolved to everyone's satisfaction" (Coulson, 2000, p. 36). While it is clear that if a story is too long — in other words "if you've written a thumbsucker or a goat-choker" — an editor may cut or trim a few paragraphs (Harrower, 2007, p. 27). But what exactly makes the story too long or what exact chunks of information should news stories contain beyond the traditional 4W's and H apparently depends on each individual story and cannot be formulated in details for the NTA. In addition, there is no agreement among scholars about the level of 'badness' between non-comprehensiveness by deliberately omitting facts or not using them for other reasons. Some consider the former to be deception. For instance, Lee (2004) even includes omissions in her definition of journalistic deception as an "act of communicating messages verbally (a lie) or nonverbally through the withholding of information with the intention to initiate or sustain a false belief" (p. 98). However, to distinguish between deliberate omission and, for instance, not including some information in a news report for reasons of space, is difficult and therefore the observable pattern of leaving out some information that may raise false expectations has been assigned to the 'unacceptable' level of quality.

The vagueness of this notion makes it difficult to come up with descriptors which would clearly point out whether a specific news story is full, incomplete or contains too much information. As opposed to descriptors in other criteria, which were formulated on the basis of analyses of literature, there is insufficient literature to help formulate the descriptors in the 'comprehensiveness' criterion because authors agree only on one issue: that comprehensiveness is important. Therefore, to construct the descriptors, we used only a few suggestions drawn from the literature cited above: the problem with omissions, the understanding of the 'who' and 'what' issues, the importance of examples, and that the limitation of news should be given where relevant. To come up with other descriptors the guidelines outlined in section 1.4.3.5 and the experience of this researcher in training news reporters were used.

It should be noted that many of the descriptors are subjective and to be instrumental in instruction they need to be hyperlinked to the relevant explanatory material and examples, or provided with the personal explanatory note to support the choice of the descriptor. Such, for instance, are the first two descriptors in the 'unacceptable' level.

#### *3.3.4. Description of sources*

Description of sources in a news story contributes greatly to whether information is perceived as credible (Fuson et al., 2003) and reliable (Harrower, 2007). The criterion 'description of sources' deals with the way the sources are described in news stories as credible as opposed to the credibility going with just the names and the titles of the sources. The latter is

accounted for in the 'accuracy' criterion. The difference is in the level of respect for the audience. For those familiar with the topic of news, the name of the source, or the source's title may give sufficient information about the credibility of the source. But if the goal of journalists is to report for the general public, including for those who read news on the Internet who might be based elsewhere in the world, the description of the sources in a format that specifies their direct connectedness to the news and their level of expertise in the area of the news may make all the difference for their perception. Transparency, or revelation of "as much as possible about sources" including their biases is "the most important single element in creating a better discipline of verification" (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001, p. 80).

#### **3.3.4.1. Description of expertise, experience, direct involvement, independence of sources**

Deficient description of sources, especially, of experts, is the case in many journalistic articles (Larsson, 2003; Schwartz, 2004). If the source description does not include information on their direct knowledge of the topic, their expertise and their independence, news consumers are unable to judge the credibility of the story and pieces of information in the story (Adams, 1998; Bickler et al., 2004; Randall, 2000). Any extra information that shows the direct knowledge of the source may be useful. For instance, in business publications sources should be referred to by name, firm, influence and performance (Winkler & Wilson, 1998). In other stories it may be useful that a source was present at a relevant meeting or on the scene of an incident (Randall, 2000), or in a story about abortion the description may say that Ms A had launched a campaign against abortion at her parish church. This would identify her commitment and authority as a source (Keeble, 1994).

Journalists often fail to identify the appropriateness of an expert to comment on a particular subject. The problem of not identifying why an expert was used is especially relevant to reports on science, medicine and environmental issues (Dearing, 1995; McFarling, 2006; Moynihan et al., 2000; Sessions, 2003). In an example of the lack of identification of the sources' expertise, cited by McFarling (2006), the *New York Times* published a story by two biologists who went to the North Pole and saw water where they expected to see ice. This "watery expanse" was reported as "something never before seen by humans" (ibid, p. 248). Sea ice experts, however, explained to McFarling that cracks in sea ice open all the time throughout the Arctic, and can be miles wide.<sup>60</sup>

---

<sup>60</sup> American comic and host of a night TV show David Letterman suggested that the *New York Times* change its slogan "from 'All the News That's Fit to Print' to 'Stuff We Heard From a Guy Who Says His Friend Heard About It' (McFarling, 2006, p. 248).

The expertise of the sources, shown in their description, must be directly related to the subject of news (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001) and should not be confused with their authority or power. For instance, politicians should not comment, unless they are experts, on matters where scientific expertise is required (Sessions, 2003). A defence minister may not be the best authority on matters such as finance or foreign affairs (Bickler et al., 2004).

The following descriptors were formulated on the basis of these statements:

**‘outstanding’**: description of sources shows that information or comments come from sources with direct knowledge of the subject

**‘good’**: description of sources is sufficient to trust their authority, competence and relevance

**‘unacceptable’**: sources comment outside of their expertise

### **3.3.4.2. Description of conflicts of interest**

Another important part of sources' description is revealing any conflicts of interest. Any possible bias must be specified in the text (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001), but it is rarely done. For example, in medical articles half of experts used by journalists had ties to the industry while only 39 percent of publications disclosed these ties (Moynihan et al., 2000). Gary Schwitzer (1992), assistant professor at the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Minnesota, who specialised in health journalism for more than 25 years, points out that de-facto promotion of specific drugs or treatments by experts is a major problem in medical news reporting: “In daily medical news coverage on television, the audience is sometimes not told that the ‘experts’ being interviewed have been paid by the manufacturer of the drug or device being discussed” (Schwitzer, 1992, p. 19). Bickler et al. (2004) recommends “to include a short sentence of background to clarify context for the reader, for example to explain if a source has a financial or professional interest in the subject, has had a long-standing dispute with the person he or she is criticising, or has some other personal involvement” (pp. 66-67). For example, if you are quoting a critical comment about government policy, the citation “commentator Hassan Ali said” is not as precise as “said Hassan Ali, a regular columnist for the leading opposition newspaper Tribune”. Or if you are quoting a comment supportive of the government, “said Randall Braithwaite, an independent expert on the region” would be misleading if the following applied “said Randall Braithwaite, a consultant who has regularly advised the government on regional issues” (ibid, p. 67).

Journalists should be honest in describing sources. If a nuclear industry apologist is identified only as ‘an expert on the biological effects of radiation’, the public cannot properly assess the information such as that the nuclear contamination caused by a nuclear plant’s plutonium releases is “far too low to pose a risk to the health of individuals” (Lee & Solomon, 1990, p. 204). It is also dishonest to present a private consultant or a businessman as an independent

expert — his or her connections in business must be established (Lee & Solomon, 1990). As an example the authors refer to labelling as ‘independent foreign policy expert’ ex-secretary of state Henry Kissinger, who after retirement from the US government became the owner of a private consultancy firm that profited from a friendly investment climate in China in a story about economic sanctions against it.

The following descriptors were formulated on the basis of these statements:

‘**good**’: description of sources is sufficient to trust their independence

‘**inappropriate**’: description of sources is unclear or insufficient to judge their independence

‘**unacceptable**’: sources have a conflict of interest

#### 3.3.4.3. Implicit descriptions

Kovach & Rosenstiel (2001) write that the rule of transparency is “all too frequently violated” (p. 82) by either giving sources no description or saying simply “sources said”. Randall (2000) adds ‘analysts’, ‘experts’, or ‘this newspaper’s sources’ to the list of implicit sources. Lee & Solomon (1990) explain the criticism of the use of such descriptions by saying such attribution is used for promoting a point of view favoured by a reporter. Authors called the following descriptions “an insult to common sense”: “According to the best available scientific estimates [which the journalist never identified], 99.9 percent of carcinogens in the diet come from natural sources [which she never identified] (ibid, p. 50). However, other authors point out that sometimes generic names such as ‘officials say’ or ‘analysts say’, or ‘currency traders at major banks said’ can be used, especially in the intro, on the condition that the names are provided further in the story, or followed by an anecdote, example or quote that justifies the assertion (Mencher, 1994; Winkler & Wilson, 1998).

The following descriptor was formulated on the basis of these statements:

‘**inappropriate**’: information is attributed to a group (e.g.: ‘sources say’) without further elaboration

#### 3.3.4.4. Description of anonymous sources<sup>61</sup>

To provide sources with credibility, media organisations demand that journalists give as much context and detail as possible about sources whether they are named or unnamed. Reuters explain this by the need “to authenticate information they provide” (*Reuters handbook of journalism*, 2008). More description is usually required if anonymous sources are used. An explanation must be provided on why the source requested anonymity (*AP reminds staff*

---

<sup>61</sup> The previous section in which anonymous sources were discussed addressed only their use while this section addresses the way they should be described in news stories

*about policy*, 2005; Keeble, 1994; Scanlan, 2000; Stenvall, 2008). The AP's statement on values and principles goes even further: "[w]hen it's relevant, we must describe the source's motive for disclosing the information" (*The Associated Press statement of values and principles*, 2006). Such disclosure is important if there is a reason to believe that the source has a motive to distort the facts for his personal gain (Itule & Anderson, 1991). Some media organisations in recent years have imposed even stricter rules on the use of anonymous sources and started to explain why they decided to grant particular sources anonymity. *New York Times* ombudsman Byron Calame pointed out in one of his columns available on the website of the newspaper that the new practice of entitling the source anonymity is a "switch from the previous practice" in which anonymity was granted if a source asked for it (Calame, 2005):

[T]ake a July 27 [2005] article about the relocation of 50,000 soldiers to United States bases from Germany and South Korea: "The relocation, to be completed by 2008, was described by two Pentagon officials who have worked on the project and were granted anonymity so they would describe the changes before an official announcement expected later this week." Straight shooting, I would say.

I like the Pentagon article's use of "granted anonymity" — wording that makes clearer to the reader that the Times was indeed deciding the two officials were entitled to remain anonymous. Unfortunately, it is sparsely used. If Mr. Keller and Allan M. Siegal, the standards editor, were to make "granted anonymity because ..." the default language for explanations, I think it would quickly spur reporters to take greater care in negotiating deals with confidential sources (ibid).

The following descriptor was formulated on the basis of these statements:

**'good'**: explanation why a high-ranking source was granted anonymity is provided in the text

**'acceptable'**: it is explained where needed why a source requested anonymity; or was granted anonymity<sup>62</sup>

**'inappropriate'**: anonymity is granted without a clear reason or explaining the reason; motivation of an anonymous source to disclose information is not given where necessary

**'unacceptable'**: anonymous source is used without description; or justification

### 3.3.4.5. Sensitive descriptions

Descriptions used in news should always be relevant to the story. If racial or ethnic labels, or people's disability or religious beliefs or sexual orientation have nothing to do with news they should not be used (Rich, 2009; Woods, 2003). Journalists should also avoid labelling people as 'disabled' or 'handicapped' describing their disability instead (Rich, 2009). Names of child

---

62 The descriptor that has 'where needed' phrase needs to be additionally explained in a personal message if it was chosen for training purposes because of the implicitness of this phrase

victims and victims of rape and other identifying information (names of parents, relatives, acquaintances, street address, school name etc) should not appear in news because it can exacerbate trauma, complicate recovery, discourage future disclosures and inhibit co-operation with authorities for the children involved (Jones, Finkelhor, & Beckwith, 2010; Steele, 2002).

The descriptor that is formulated using these suggestions is as follows:

**‘inappropriate’:** age; ethnicity; race; faith; disability; or other labelling descriptions are used unjustifiably

#### **3.3.4.6. The length of descriptions**

If the source — whether named or anonymous — has several titles or other attributes mentioned above (including relevant background or involvements, or conflicts of interest), they should be scattered throughout the text. One such example is given by (Stenvall, 2008) who showed how an anonymous source could have three instalments of his identification in descending order of importance throughout the text: He was: (a) “a senior Afghan military official”, (b) “[t]he senior Afghan official who warned of other rebel pockets”, and, (c) “a top aide of Defence Minister General Mohammad Fahim” (p. 240).

The descriptor that is formulated using these suggestions is as follows:

**‘inappropriate’:** description of sources is excessive and ‘speed bumps’ reading

#### **3.3.4.7. Levels of quality in the ‘description of sources’ criterion**

As in a few other criteria, inferences drawn from the analysis of literature did not allow some descriptors that should logically belong to the NTA to be directly formulated. To come up with these descriptors, the guidelines were used from section 1.4.3.5 which helped to articulate the first two descriptors in the ‘unacceptable’ and ‘inappropriate’ levels, and the first in the ‘acceptable’ level. However, as they are implicit the instructor will have to explain the choice in a personal note.

#### **3.3.5. *Description of the circumstances of getting information***

Answer to the question “How do you know what you know?” — in other words, description of the circumstances in which information was obtained — is part of the “Rule of transparency” defined by Kovach & Rosenstiel (2001, p. 80). The demand to show the origin of information goes beyond the classical naming of the source, which is analysed in two sections of this chapter ‘description of sources’ and ‘attribution to sources’. If people know how information for news stories was obtained it may make a difference in the way it is perceived and even have an effect on its credibility (Rupar, 2006; Winkler & Wilson, 1998).



Transparency has already become a rule in the blogosphere where speed is considered to be more important than fact checking (Singer, 2007).

Providing the circumstances in which information was obtained is especially significant if information leaked to reporters by ‘para-journalists’ (Schudson, 2003) such as PR workers, has a spin, but, as neither the source, nor the newsgathering process is emphasised in news stories, people have no way of identifying this spin (Rupar, 2006). The problem is exacerbated by the amount of news that originates from or has some connection with the sources in PR companies (Davies, 2008). Research cited by Davies showed that over half of news — 54 percent — came from the PR industry. Davies labelled such reporting “churnalism” (p. 60). Phillips (2010), who gave such stories the name of “vanilla news” writes that the Davies’ figure “may be low” (p. 1).

The effect of the transparent description of the way information was obtained — or “newsgathering process” (Rupar, 2006, p. 127) — on the credibility of a news story is especially important in the digital world. Director of the BBC Global News Division Richard Sambrook said at a Social Media Convention in Oxford that “transparency is what delivers trust to the news consumers” (Bunz, 2009). News today still has to be accurate and fair, but it is as important for the readers, listeners and viewers to see how the news is produced, where the information comes from, and how it works. The emergence of news is as important, as the delivering of the news itself (Sambrook quoted in Bunz, 2009).

### **3.3.5.1. The extent of transparency**

The degree to which journalists should go to achieve transparency cannot be easily defined. It is clear that any details of where information comes from should be relevant and provide additional insight. For instance Stenvall (2008, p. 240) refers to an example of the use of a top source: “the expression ‘told Reuters’ denotes that the information has been given exclusively to the Reuters correspondent (and not, for instance, at a public press conference).” The internal guide for reporters and editors of Bloomberg says that naming the circumstances in which information was obtained contribute to its understanding:

Consider the difference between “I feel your pain,” President Clinton said and “I feel your pain,” President Clinton said in the text of a speech to be delivered to homeless people in Philadelphia. The context is vague in the first example and precise in the second one (Winkler & Wilson, 1998, p. 34).

However, journalism textbooks contain little mention of the techniques of the use of this element and they are very brief when they do and do not explicitly state such a need or describe the limitation of the use of this tool. For example, the *Universal Journalist* suggests that this “need not take much explanation, just a simple phrase will do, such as ‘said in a prepared press statement’, or ‘told reporters in answer to questions’ (Randall, 2000, p. 180).

Bickler et al. (2004) also provide examples of the use of what they call ‘context’:

Always tell your reader how and from where the information was obtained. For example, ‘said at a news conference’, ‘in a statement to reporters’, or ‘in an interview with this newspaper’. Avoid the showy and overused term ‘exclusive interview’. If some quotations from a source come from a previously published report, a document or public statement, and other quotations within the same article come from a direct interview, clearly identify which is which (Bickler et al., 2004, p. 72).

These statements allowed the formulation of the following descriptor for the NTA1:

‘**good**’: circumstances in which information was obtained are relevant to the story

### **3.3.5.2. Limitations of transparency of the newsgathering process**

Showing circumstances in which the information was obtained is clearly important, but should news reporters show the circumstances in which they obtain information every time they have to refer to a source? For instance, after analysing how three major newspapers in New Zealand explain the way they receive information,<sup>63</sup> Rupar (2006) found out that only 62.7 percent of news articles clarified their newsgathering process. But did all the articles have to do it? Most of the information that news reporters are getting from human sources is routinely and obviously obtained personally by a reporter from a face-to-face or a telephone interview with someone known or who can be tracked down. There is some consensus here: the audience expects that the information was obtained personally by the journalists. So if the circumstances in which information was obtained do not contribute to increasing the transparency or credibility of the information but rather unnecessarily increase the length of the story, should they be used? Rupar says ‘no’:

Clearly, no one expects all articles to provide a complete list of explanations regarding the newsgathering process. It would not only clash with the internal constraints of time and space, but it would bring an unnecessary and boring punctiliousness into news stories, which are, let us not forget, narratives. But, presentation of certain forms of public discourse, such as press releases, require sharper journalistic alertness (Rupar, 2006, p. 139).

Rupar points at the public discourse forms only for the reason that lack of transparency of the newsgathering process may contain spin. Many other authors also mention the need to refer to press conferences, statements, or press releases and not create the impression that the quote was obtained first-hand (Rich, 2009). But, apparently, out of the examples given above, it is clear that failure to describe the circumstances in which information was obtained is not only about possible spin by PR people or the dishonesty of a reporter. It also affects the credibility of and trust in the information, and thus they should be described every time the newsgathering process is unusual, or the information is exclusive or controversial, or a source

---

<sup>63</sup> Rupar analysed news coverage on genetically engineered products in New Zealand

is very important, or the circumstances themselves are showy and meaningful. In other words, the newsgathering process must be detailed always except if the information was provided in routine circumstances. But what are the routine circumstances? No specific instructions regarding this were found in available literature.

Experience of this researcher as a trainer and a journalist suggests that there are quite a few conditions even in 'routine' newsgathering processes that may require clarification. For instance, if the source is not local but was in town temporarily, or the source is a very important official who is usually hardly or never available for interviews, or information has been received from a local source who is known to be out of town, or a local source was interviewed from some non-conventional location (e.g. prison), and even if information was obtained personally by a journalist by telephone from a source whom the journalist does not know. In these and similar cases, which may cast doubt on the credibility of information, the Kovach & Rosenstiel's question "How do you know?" applies and the circumstances should be explained.

The circumstances at the same time should be unobtrusive so that they do not interrupt the flow of the news text and not be ridiculous. The *USA Today*'s editor Ken Paulson, when asked about the degree of transparency that journalists should strive for, spoke about two transparent toys from his childhood, which had their inner organs exposed:

What you quickly discovered after building the model is that you really didn't want to see all the organs ... I think there is a middle ground in which we should always explain anything that would raise questions about our credibility and our professionalism (Smolkin, 2006, p. 23).

For online news journalism, additional rituals of transparency could be used: hyperlinks to the original material or to the sources may be published (Hayes, Singer, & Ceppos, 2007; Karlsson, 2010; Lasica, 2004).

The Reuters *Handbook of Journalism* warns of the possible deceptions if communication with the sources is not face to face:

Consider carefully if the person you are communicating with is an impostor. Sources can provide information by whatever means available — telephone, in person, email, instant messaging, text message. But be aware that any communication can be interfered with.

Therefore, clearly stating the way the information has been obtained — for example, 'by email' — adds to the efforts of the journalists to achieve transparency.

These statements allowed formulation of the following descriptors for the NTA1:

**'good':** circumstances in which information was obtained are provided if information was obtained in unusual circumstances including not in a face-to-face interview or by

phone from a local non-VIP source based in the same location; or they are not provided if they are usual or obvious

**‘unacceptable’**: no circumstances in which information was obtained are provided where they are necessary to trust the information and there is a reason to suggest that it was obtained in circumstances other than in a face-to-face interview or by phone from a local non-VIP source in the same city

In summary, because of insufficient instructional material and examples in the available literature, the descriptors for the ‘unacceptable’, ‘acceptable’, and ‘outstanding’ levels of quality were formulated using the guidelines in section 1.4.3.5, along with inferences from the literature cited above and the experience of this researcher in training journalists in post-USSR countries.

The biggest difficulty was to formulate the descriptor for the ‘outstanding’ level. However, the guideline that adding some polish to the way the descriptor is formulated in the ‘good’ level helped to formulate the descriptions concisely. Integrating them in the text unobtrusively requires more effort on the part of reporters. One way to integrate this unobtrusively is to spread long descriptions of the circumstances in which information was obtained — especially if these descriptions have to be combined with the descriptions of the source — throughout the story in instalments by mentioning the most important parts of the descriptions first and the other parts in the following paragraphs.

The descriptions in the ‘unacceptable’ and the ‘acceptable’ levels were formulated based on the guidelines and the experience of this reporter. However, they are implicit and thus need to be explained in a personal message if used in the training process.

### 3.3.6. *Attribution to sources*

Providing attribution to sources, or sourcing, is part of the “journalistic obligation to strive for objectivity” (Granato, 1991, p. 43). Stories with attributions are more objective and believable (Sandar, 1998). Journalists and journalism authors generally agree on what should be attributed to a source: whatever journalists have not seen themselves by being at the scene of news (Tucker, 2008); “what is not readily verifiable” (Lorenz & Vivian, 1996, p. 120); or “when opinions or other information subject to change or controversy is cited (Itule & Anderson, 1991; Randall, 2000), including disputed historical facts (Bickler et al., 2004). Everything that “may be challenged by another source” needs more “detailed and prominent” sourcing than stories that contain no conflict (Randall, 2000, p. 179). Some authors argue that everything except the “universally known facts” needs to be attributed. “The reader will assume that anything not attributed to someone came from the writer ... There’s no place for that [unattributed statements] in professionally done publications” (Adams, 1998, p. 62-63).

### 3.3.6.1. Cases that need no attribution

Despite Adams' opinion, many other authors list types of factual information that need no attribution:

- events or facts witnessed by many (Brooks et al., 1988; Lorenz & Vivian, 1996; Rich, 2009; Tucker, 2008)
- events or facts of which a reporter has direct evidence or which he or she observed directly (Friend et al., 2000; Itule & Anderson, 1991; Lorenz & Vivian, 1996; Mencher, 1994; Rich, 2009)
- if information is obvious or generally known, or is a matter of public record (Brooks et al., 1988; Friend et al., 2000; Grundy, 2007; Harrower, 2007; Mencher, 1994; Randall, 2000; Rich, 2009)
- if information is available from several sources or can be immediately verified by other sources (Brooks et al., 1988; Randall, 2000)
- a summary of what the story is about (usually the beginning of the story) (Tucker, 2008)
- the intro, unless it contains contentious information (Rich, 2009; Tucker, 2008)
- the intro, if the source of information is implied, for example: "Firemen from four stations fought the blaze for more than six hours." It is clear that the firemen are the sources, but some exact source should be mentioned in the next paragraph (Adams, 1998).
- any part of the text if it is obvious who is the source (Adams, 1998)
- background information established in previous stories about the same subject (Rich, 2009) or taken from some records (Mencher, 1994).

All these points concern attributing facts and an important point is that all of them concern non-contentious information. Apparently, authors agree that any controversy must be attributed.

There is also plenty of evidence that unattributed judgements are used in news stories as descriptive or explanatory details, as short blocks explaining importance at the top of news stories, and also as various kinds of context throughout the text of news to provide background, or political, economic or other necessary information that helps the reader to create meaning (see Appendix 16 for more on contexts).

The issue of whether or not descriptive, explanatory or contextual information should be attributed to a source is rather controversial. On the one hand, if no source is given and contextual information relies on no authority, it may "read more like an editorial" (Scanlan, 2000, p. 170). On the other hand, few authors insist that all contextual information should be attributed as do Lee & Solomon (1990), who write that unattributed assertions are of questionable validity. Many suggest the opposite: "[b]ackground can come from a source, who explains something technical; or from the reporter, to make a story clearer", write Itule & Anderson (1991, p. 134). The Associated Press permitted its reporters "to draw conclusions

when it was based on their reporting and expertise” (Scanlan, 2000, p. 170). Mencher (1994) also supports the idea of unattributed explanations of an “experienced reporter” (p. 29) who provides judgments. He gives an example: “The Waverly hotel, popular earlier in the century, was destroyed by a two-alarm fire today”, and explains that no attribution is needed because “the condition of the hotel is a physical fact about which the reporter has no doubt”.

Experience of reporters indeed may help them to articulate various descriptions, contexts and explanations, but the readers do not know whether the reporter is experienced and thus allowed to do what they may see as editorialising. Therefore, until the reporters become famous, they should avoid using any descriptive information that may be understood as subjective and thus cause distrust. This corresponds with the view of Bickler et al. (2004) who write that any contentious facts or disputed contexts need to be attributed. Therefore, only contextual, descriptive, or explanatory information which is simple, agreed on, and not controversial may be left unattributed.

The analysis in this section allowed formulation of the following descriptors for the NTA1:

‘**good**’: attributions to sources is made for all new information; and for all controversial information

‘**unacceptable**’: attributions to sources is missing for all new information; and for all controversial information

### **3.3.6.2. The verb of attribution**

One other controversial issue in the attribution domain is whether it is expedient to use other words than ‘said’ to attribute information to a source. Kershner (2004) considers amateurish the efforts of writers to avoid the use of the verb ‘said’ and to replace it with synonyms.

One reason that said works so well is that readers tend to read right over it quickly without noticing it. It communicates the idea that a person is speaking, but it does not get in the way. A news story can include the phrase “she said” again and again, and the readers will not even be aware of the repetition (Kershner, 2004, p. 38).

Experience of this researcher as a journalist and a trainer shows that inexperienced journalists and journalists in post-USSR countries often vary the attribution verbs just for the sake of variety, and such variation is part of the media outlet’s implicit house style.<sup>64</sup> Most journalistic authors agree that the only ‘safe’ verb of utterance, that bears no connotative meaning, is neutral, “colorless”, “unobtrusive” and “calls no attention to itself” (Brooks et al., 1988, p. 126-127), is ‘said’, because it means only that someone said something (Granato, 1991). ‘Said’ is “short, clear, neutral and unfailingly accurate” (Cappon & Press, 2000, p. 59).

---

<sup>64</sup> Many news organisations in developing countries do not have a style book or an editor responsible for the house style, and if the style book exists, it may not define which variations of the attribution verbs should be used.

Verbs like ‘stated’, ‘asserted’, ‘revealed’, ‘claimed’, ‘explained’, ‘quipped’ have a meaning beyond describing the circumstances under which something was uttered (Granato, 1991; Tucker, 2008). For example ‘stated’ means some formal utterance, ‘asserted’ means utterance with an emphasis, ‘revealed’ can be used only on the first use of the information, ‘explained’ is used if something is explained, ‘according to’ calls into question the truth of what a source is saying and should be used only in stories about disputes (Granato, 1991). Rich (2009) recommends using ‘according to’ only to refer to inanimate objects, such as studies. Attribution words ‘claimed’, ‘maintained’ and ‘contended’ mean that a journalist implies that he or she does not believe the person who said something (Brooks et al., 1988). Itule & Anderson (1991) add the verbs ‘asserted’, ‘bellowed’, ‘contended’, ‘cried’, ‘declared’, ‘emphasised’, ‘hinted’, ‘harangued’, ‘opined’, ‘stated’, ‘stammered’, ‘stressed’ to the list, and Kershner (1994) the verbs ‘avowed’ and ‘snorted’. The use of the verbs ‘ask’ and ‘demand’ may mean that a journalist is editorialising (Brooks et al., 1988). Using the verbs ‘mused’, ‘expostulated’, ‘interjected’ or ‘remonstrated’ may not be understood by readers, and “such self-consciously clever diction distracts the readers’ attention from the quotation and from the story” (Aitchison, 1988, p. 101). Friend et al (2000) include the words ‘demanded’, ‘insisted’, ‘threatened’, ‘admitted’, ‘conceded’ and ‘acknowledged’ in the category of loaded verbs, but the authors add that if appropriate for the context, these verbs “may be suitable” (p. 181). Fox (2001) agrees that some verbs — he lists ‘pointed out’, ‘warned’, ‘argued’ and ‘predicted’ — are good substitutes for ‘said’ provided they add meaning to the sentence and accurately reflect the context of the remark.

It is also a mistake to use verbs that describe states of mind rather than utterance, including ‘feels’, ‘believes’ and ‘thinks’, because no one can be sure what another person feels, believes in or thinks about. It should be written that the source ‘said that he thinks it is a good idea’ rather than that the source ‘thinks that it is a good idea’ (Granato, 1991). Other authors point at improper substitution of the attribution ‘said’ with such verbs as ‘grinned’, ‘laughed’, ‘frowned’ instead of ‘said’ (Brooks et al., 1988), ‘giggled’ or ‘choked’ (Rich, 2009), ‘shrugged’ (Fox, 2001), ‘smiled’ or ‘grimaced’ (Itule & Anderson, 1991) because verbs of attribution “refer to speech and not to conduct or action” (ibid, p. 159).

Passive attributions should also not be used. Print media often gives formulas of attribution such as ‘it is understood’, ‘it was said’, ‘it was announced’, which raise the question, by whom? (Randall, 2000). The text should clearly specify who understands, says or announces it. “[P]assive attribution uses the impersonal voice of the bureaucracy claiming omnipotence — and we all know how reliable that is” (ibid, p. 179).

**“Use words other than ‘said’ only when they mean precisely what they imply”**, writes Adams (1998, p. 63). Friend et al (2000) point at three acceptable variations of the attribution

‘said’: ‘told’ if a source was speaking in a public forum; ‘said in a statement’; and ‘according to’ which is used in paraphrasing or summarising of some information. ‘According to’ can also be used in case of reference to a study or other inanimate objects (Rich, 2009). Itule & Anderson (1991) include the verb ‘added’ in the list and the verbs ‘asked’ and ‘answered’ were also used in the news text provided as an example of attribution. Aitchison (1988) adds the verb ‘stated’ to the acceptable attribution verbs and writes that ‘explained’, ‘insisted’, ‘repeated’ or ‘denied’ also could be used if they are “needed to clarify the nature of the quotation” (ibid, p. 101).

Analysis in this section allowed formulation of two descriptors for the low quality levels:

‘**inappropriate**’: other than ‘said’ attribution verb is used without a reason

‘**unacceptable**’: passive attribution of the kind ‘it is understood’ is used

### 3.3.6.3. Attribution in the intro

One element of the attribution to sources element of news writing — attribution in the intro — caused a particular difficulty in regards to its placement into a particular criterion in the NTA. This element logically belongs to two criteria — ‘attribution to sources’, which is analysed in this section, and ‘intro’, which is an element in the ‘Structure’ category. According to the guidelines for the creation of the NTA, presented in section 1.4.3.5 descriptors should not be cross-used in different categories. Attribution in the intro has specific features, which deal with the goal of the intro to entice the readers and not only to give them information, and that is why sometimes journalists do not use attributions in the intro, or use a generalised attribution, which is contradictory to the general rule of the use of attributions throughout the text. Therefore, the decision was taken to use the descriptors for the attribution in the intro in the ‘intro’ criterion, while renaming the criterion ‘attribution to sources’ as “attribution to sources except attribution in the intro”.

### 3.3.6.4. Mechanics of the attribution

Several non-controversial elements of this criterion including the location and the order of attribution to sources will be further analysed in Table 9,

**Table 9. Elements of the criterion ‘attribution to sources except attribution in the intro’**

<i>Elements of the criterion</i>	<i>Content, author</i>	<i>Elements of the descriptors in different levels of the NTA, explanations where needed</i>
Location of the attribution	The attribution in most cases is placed at the end of the utterance because it is the assertion which is important, not the attribution (Brooks et al., 1988; Friend et	‘ <b>good</b> ’: it is always clear who or what the source is either immediately or after a first



	<p>al., 2000; Itule &amp; Anderson, 1991; Lorenz &amp; Vivian, 1996). Exceptions: attribution can start the sentence in case the source is significant (Friend et al., 2000; Itule &amp; Anderson, 1991; Lorenz &amp; Vivian, 1996); if the quote is long (Harrower, 2007); in case several sources are being quoted in the text one after another (Aitchison, 1988; Brooks et al., 1988; Friend et al., 2000; Itule &amp; Anderson, 1991; Tucker, 2008). To avoid beginning several paragraphs with the attributions, a transition sentence should be used (Itule &amp; Anderson, 1991)</p> <p>If a quote is more than one sentence long, the attribution should be placed at the end of the first sentence (Brooks et al., 1988; Friend et al., 2000; Itule &amp; Anderson, 1991). Typically the first sentence should be short, as the example suggested by the author shows</p> <p>To add variety, the attribution can be placed mid-sentence (Lorenz &amp; Vivian, 1996), but not if it interrupts the thought (Rich, 2009), for example, breaking the logic of a quote. Eg.: “It just makes you feel permanently like a girl,” said Brad Pitt, explaining his sex appeal, “walking past construction workers”</p> <p>Attribution should be used only once in a quotation even if the quote continues for several paragraphs (Harrower, 2007; Itule &amp; Anderson, 1991)</p> <p>If there are more than three sources in the story, reintroduce them where necessary because readers cannot remember all of them by the name only (Rich, 2009)</p>	<p>short sentence</p> <p><b>‘acceptable’</b>: attributions are used too low to immediately understand where information is coming from</p> <p><b>‘unacceptable’</b>: location of the attribution makes the quote confusing</p> <p>The following descriptor was made of the ‘outstanding’ quality because it manifests high level of respect for the readers</p> <p><b>‘outstanding’</b>: if the same sources are referred to later and a reader may have forgotten them, their relevance or title is repeated</p>
Order of attribution verbs and the source’s identification elements	<p>At the first mention of the source the title should go first, then the first name and the last name (Tucker, 2008). The source should be fully identified at the first mention (Brooks et al., 1988).</p> <p>Noun or pronoun should be placed before the verb of attribution (Brooks et al., 1988). Exception: If the attributives are long, then the verb should be placed first (Friend et al., 2000; Lorenz &amp; Vivian, 1996)</p>	<p>This descriptor lists details of identification of the source which are rather widely accepted and used and therefore there is no need to list them all in the NTA</p> <p><b>‘inappropriate’</b>: the order of identification of a source is inappropriate</p>
Accuracy and honesty in attribution	<p>Quotes should not be attributed to more than one person (Brooks et al., 1988)</p> <p>A statement in the text sounds as though it comes from a source, but it is clear from</p>	<p><b>‘inappropriate’</b>: Attributions are unclear, misleading or confusing, e.g. individual statements or quotes are</p>

	the text that a reporter did not interview the source, for example: ‘Smith said that he knocked one mugger down’ while the information apparently was given by the police. It is misleading (Itule & Anderson, 1991)	attributed to a group of people
--	--	---------------------------------

Only one descriptor was added to the NTA1 at the discretion of this researcher. Experience in training in post-USSR countries shows that, other than patterns that were possible to find or formulate on the grounds of the literature analysis, one very common pattern is using attribution in the beginning of paragraphs or sentences, which may go for several paragraphs in a row confusing the flow of the thought in the story instead of being used to introduce a new source in a transitional paragraph or otherwise. Therefore, this descriptor was added to the ‘inappropriate’ level of the NTA1. Implicit words used in the language, including ‘unnecessarily’ and ‘inappropriate’ will have to be additionally explained by the instructor who would choose these descriptors for assessment or training purposes.

### *Summary*

News reporters should not expect to achieve ultimate truth in news stories, but they need to achieve journalistic truth that is valid for now, but subject to further investigation.

News writing on controversies is unlikely to be perceived as truthful by partisans whatever efforts are put into reporting. Therefore, efforts should concentrate on delivering accurate and fair news reports for people unfamiliar with the issue.

Knowing rules of attribution to sources and understanding how and in which cases the circumstances in which information was obtained contributes substantially to the credibility and factual quality of news. Three separate criteria that scrutinise these rules were detailed in this section.

## **3.4. Meaning**

Journalists are obliged to deliver their readers the meaning of facts they report (Friedlander, Marsh, & Masterson, 1987). Readers should not only be getting facts, but also be able to see “what is important about the facts, what the facts mean” (Friedlander & al, 1987, p. 256). Graber (1984, p. 151) agreed: “The ultimate purpose of most information gathering is the extraction of meaning.” News should give explanation and help making sense of the “world that is growing more mind-boggling by the minute” (Glover, 1999, p. xiii). In an age of an

“extraordinary ... torrent of information”, “on a scale that was unimaginable even just a few years ago” it has become reporters’ responsibility to provide “explanation and understanding and background,” Associated Press president and chief executive officer Louis Boccardi was quoted as saying in Schwartz (2002, p. 21).

Not long ago, “there was even a kind of bias against this kind of thing. The old way was just straight ‘he said-she said,’ and that’s what the AP was supposed to do,” Boccardi says. “We have moved off that. ... What the times demand is helping the reader cope with this flow of information which is beyond anybody’s capacity to deal with” (ibid).

Media mogul and founder of the powerful News Corporation Rupert Murdoch advised his news executives to watch how their teenage children are getting their news and to learn from that if they do not want to lose a whole generation of potential readers: “They want a point of view about not just what happened but why it happened. They want news that speaks to them personally, that affects their lives” (cited in Ponsford, 2005, p. 2). A contributor to the textbook by Scanlan (2000), ex-*Washington Post* ombudsman Geneva Overholser was quoted as saying that it is not information about some event that readers are looking for in news media, but “context, meaning, perspective. They want to know what difference it will make to them” (p. 9). In the book, *The Press*, Overholser and her co-author go even further: “A news story would be a buzzing jumble of facts if journalists did not impose meaning on it” (Overholser & Jamieson, 2005, p. 193).

Journalists are advised by these authors to create meaning in several main ways: by providing contexts (Scanlan, 2000a), by explanations of news (Friedlander, et al., 1987), by focusing on the impact of news (Bickler, et al., 2004; Buttry, 2005; Granato, 1991; Rich, 2009; Scanlan, 2000a), and, by supplying information that is practically useful. As Parks (2006, p. 87), put it, news is “more meaningful and engaging if readers can use it in their lives.” If meaning is not explained, readers create it themselves, based on their knowledge and experience (Fish, 1980; Hartley, 1982; Neuman, Just, & Crigler, 1992). Giving it to readers to self-explain is especially relevant for news stories that provide only facts and no background, context or explanation. Facts-only reporting gives the audience the choice of one of two approaches:

The active approach “puts a great deal of faith in the power of the media to change behavior and make us better. On the passive side, is the cafeteria-line model of communications — the media dish out the news and the public takes what it wants. The press have no special mission in this approach, since most people have no interest in what the press is conveying (Neuman, Just, & Crigler, 1992, p. 118).

Research shows that if the meaning of news is not explained or is insufficient, people make sense of news by “linking a news story (by definition, new information) to a news issue and an interpretive frame (what they already know)” and in this case different people can interpret

the same news story “in dramatically different ways” (Neuman, et al., 1992, p. 39) which does not necessarily match the message that the journalist wanted to deliver.

One explanation of the lack of sense-making information is linked to the commercialisation of the news industry. Putting things in “their larger context” creates wisdom, writes Sommerville (1999, p. 14). But, he argues, newspapers are deliberately depriving their readers of this chance and structure news in a way that destroys such context in pursuit for profits:

You have to make each day's report seem important. And you do that by reducing the importance of its context. If readers were aware of the bigger story it would diminish today's contribution to that story. So news-industry profits absolutely depend on dumbing us down by deconstructing our world by dailiness. In reporting today's news they have to make us want to come back tomorrow for more news — more change. Tomorrow the implication will be that today's report can now be forgotten (Sommerville, 1999, p. 14).

Stressing the ever increasing need to provide explanations to the public, Donsbach (2009) writes: “As the importance and the challenges of journalism grow, the occupation's task of explaining the world to the public becomes more complex and demanding” (p. 47). But despite the apparent need for contextualising and explaining news, not many journalism textbooks contain chapters or even sections dedicated to assist novice reporters in helping the audience to extract meaning from news stories (see section 3.1.1). Donsbach (2009) points out the lack of educational resources to teach this skill and demands a “response by journalism education and by the professional community” (ibid).

The following sections focus, among other issues, on several practically important issues that often come up in training and journalism practice, especially in digital journalism: should hard news deliver meaning, how should journalists take into account the versatile audience they write for and the ways to explain news and at the same time to maintain impartiality. Clarification of these issues is important to create descriptors in the NTA.

### **Should hard news stories deliver meaning?**

News stories should be brief, but complete, writes Mencher (1994). But to many these two issues seem irreconcilable. Time pressure in digital media and lack of space in newspapers are the main reasons that news stories often present just facts including someone's utterances but no further explanations to make news meaningful. Sommerville (1999) points out that absence of “extended thinking” in news reports is due to space limitations: “it takes too much space to explain something” (ibid, p. 44). However, Mencher (1994) does not accept that lack of space is a good excuse in the case of a complicated news story: “Some events are so complex that only an extended account will do. Important stories often require scene-setting and background that consume time and space” (ibid, p. 43).

In journalism practice there is no unanimous position on whether journalists should just report facts or make sure that audiences understand them and are able to make use of their new knowledge. Some authors suggest that making meaning should not be part of hard news, but an element of news features that “move beyond the short-form news account and take more space to elaborate on the background to news, sometimes providing in-depth analysis and interpretation” (Tucker, 2008, p. 47). In Tucker’s description of the structure of a hard news story he suggests a straightforward account of 4W’s and H without providing any larger picture to which news belongs or explanations.

While academics give contradictory messages on the need to explain news, practitioners are more in agreement on how to deliver meaning in news stories. Whether or not the meaning is delivered in practice depends on the importance of news. In the modern digital world, important news is usually updated several times — and not only by news agencies, but also by newspapers’ website editions — and not only the latest facts and quotes are added but also contexts and experts’ explanations that help readers to better understand the news. Therefore, adding information that provides meaning to facts boosts the chance that the news consumers would make sense of the news and care about the news. Information that helps to create meaning should be an element of important hard news reports.

### **Ways to construct meaning for the versatile audience**

Another aspect of creating meaning is that meaning is not something that exists by itself. It is created as a result of the interaction of the reader with the text, and people cannot read without interpreting if they want to make sense of news (Fish, 1980). Information may mean something to one category of news consumers and make no sense to another one. Writing without knowing the audience is like “lecturing in a dark room to an unknown audience” (Randall, 2000, p. 26). But even knowing the general audience may not help, because readers are firstly, different individuals and, secondly, not just passive recipients of news (Steiner, 1988). Steiner also points out the “situatedness of readers” (1988, p. 646): “Each article is not read in isolation and reading is affected by previous reading, by anticipation of what may come, by what has just been read, by what has been already ‘known’” (ibid, p. 645). Scharrer (2008) adds exposure to television programmes and films to the list of what has impact on the “situatedness” of people. She writes that exposure to violent programmes desensitises people’s attitudes to news they read:

[H]eavy daily doses of news can be associated with weaker emotional responses and perceptions of these types of events as common upon reading about real-life violent events from newspaper excerpts among those low in empathy. The potential for not just “extreme” violent media forms such as horror films but rather daily exposure to ordinary news media outlets to contribute to a blunted response to violence in some individuals is profound (p. 302).

Steiner (1988) adds that journalism textbooks “over-schematize readers and underestimate the kind, degree, and differences of readers’ participation in making meaning” (p. 644) and advises journalists “to think seriously about their readers, and not assume that articles are finished products merely to be distributed to passive readers” (p. 646).

However, Steiner's appreciation of the versatility of the audience and stressing people's proactive role as news recipients, does not translate into practical advice. What does “think seriously about the readers” mean and how can journalists take into account these “heterogenous mass audiences”, which comprise “many complex communities”, and whose “political orientations and social experiences may significantly deviate from the average” (p. 647) when writing news? She effectively gives up on the ability of reporters to deliver the intended meaning, writing that they “cannot control all its [the story’s] meanings” (p. 647) because of the diversity, including cultural, social, ethnic, political and class differences, among their readers. “Defining ‘community’ strictly in geographic terms is inadequate”, she wrote (Steiner, 1988, p. 647).

This point becomes even more sensitive in the modern digital era when even small publications have their internet editions. No reporter can predict who will pick up on their story on the internet and hardly any publication can know its potential audience.<sup>65</sup> This creates a problem: How deep should the efforts to make sense of news go, not to make those with the knowledge scoff at the story if interpretations dominate over the facts, while at the same time giving sufficient materials for the outsiders to help create the meaning?

The solution conveniently comes from the web: its ability to create hyperlinks to the explanatory and contextual materials allows many categories of news consumers to be served. Such materials may go in-depth and the consumers may choose the extent to which they find out the information that would help them to make sense of the news story. However, first-priority issues that help to understand the text for an average reader need to be used in the text itself so that even news consumers with local knowledge are reminded of the relevant larger picture which helps them to make sense of the news. The same idea can be translated into the design of the online NTA: some descriptors, which will have to be formulated holistically because of space constraints, will be hyperlinked to relevant explanations so that journalism trainees receive sufficient instructional material.

---

<sup>65</sup> One curious case occurred in the practice of this researcher who started in a small English-language publication in Russia just after it was launched in 1993. A story was soon published about an expatriate American, who was shot at in his car in a St. Petersburg street and the bullet hit his secretary’s bottom. An email the next day came from Monaco’s police who asked to clarify the number plate on the car, which was not shown on the photograph. The man was apparently a suspect in a fraud case and wanted in this tiny European country.

### **Meaning and fairness: can they go together?**

This is a much-debated issue and impossible to be resolved within the limits of this research, both because the body of literature on this issue is too large and because the issue is controversial. Therefore, only some arguments will be discussed that seemingly contradict the widely accepted norm of using objectivity as a method. The need to provide meaning and context to news was legitimised — at least, in the United States — by the report of the Hutchins Commission in 1947 after trends towards monopolisation, centralisation and influence of advertisers on news content were detected (Bezanson, 1998). AP's Boccardi who is quoted above considers that providing meaning to news does not make it partial: "News is still fair and objective — though today's reporters must walk the fine line between putting events in perspective and giving their own opinions" (Schwartz, 2002, p. 22). Overholser and Jamieson agree that a principal responsibility of journalism is "applying judgment to information" (Overholser & Jamieson, 2005, p. 193). Professional news judgment is exercised by the editorial staff daily: decisions on the choice of stories, their framing, following up, are all made on the grounds of professional judgment (ibid). However, despite professional judgment being applied frequently, the values used for such judgments even 20 years ago were considered to be "determined not by general principles but by individual cases, each of them growing out of customs and conventional behavior" (Altschull, 1990). With the appearance of the *Elements of Journalism* (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001), which sought to outline the elements that constitute professional news judgment, many issues became clearer, but still, the authors point out, fairness and balance (see more on these elements in section 3.2.2) "are too vague to rise to the level of essential elements of the profession" (p. 13). While journalism as a discipline of verification "may have developed various techniques and conventions for determining facts, it has done less to develop a system for testing the reliability of journalistic interpretations", Kovach & Rosenstiel (2001, p. 75) write. One helpful approach, therefore, will be employed in this research to formulate descriptors in the criteria in the 'meaning' category: framing. News frames are "conceptual tools which media and individuals rely on to convey, interpret and evaluate information" (Neuman, et al., 1992, p. 60). Frames can be episodic, or focusing on events, people, or cases, and thematic, which put these events, people, or cases in a larger context helping to understand the issue behind the single occurrence thus stimulating more informed citizenship (Iyengar, 1991). The more important thematic framing is used by journalists less frequently, Iyengar noted. He wrote that the failure by journalists to make connections between important occurrences (see 'event context' in Table 10 and Appendix 16) fails to stimulate thoughtful inquiry and is detrimental to creating an informed citizenship, which he sees as key to democratic society. Whether or not such framing has been used in news texts, and how

successfully can be observed from news texts, and, therefore, can be used as one way to come up with descriptors in different quality levels.

### **People's voices as a way to make meaning**

One additional criterion was added by this researcher despite it not having been specifically suggested in the journalistic literature. It stems from the many statements that people like to read about people (Masterton, 1991; Palmer, 2000; Parks, 2006; Scanlan, 2000a) and, therefore, other people's perceptions may help readers to create meaning of news. This criterion is not an extension of the 'impact' criterion, in which impact of news on people should be provided along with the impact of news on other stakeholders. The content of this criterion, which was labelled 'people in the street's voices', is limited to opinions of ordinary people with no direct involvement in news. In this, it differs from the 'human interest' criterion in the 'Newsworthiness' category. The latter applies if people have direct involvement with news, are featured in it, or are featured in anecdotes used to illustrate the news.

#### *3.4.1. Context*

News reports may be factual and accurate (and also intelligent, entertaining, honest, expressed in fresh language and well structured), but without establishing the connections of news with the social, economic and political forces, or, in other words, without placement of new facts in meaningful contexts, texts may make little sense for the audience (Parks, 2006). News is sometimes meaningless even for journalists themselves. American online journalist and researcher Matt Thompson speaks of his frustration when trying to make sense of news reports:

For the longest time, whenever I read the news, I've often felt the depressing sensation of lacking the background I need to understand the stories that seem truly important. Day after day would bring front pages with headlines trumpeting new developments out of city hall, and day after day I'd fruitlessly comb through the stories for an explanation of their relevance, history or import. Nut grafts seemed to provide only enough information for me to realize the story was out of my depth (Thompson, 2009, p. 1).

Evans warned over 40 years ago: "[n]ever run ahead of the reader's knowledge" (Evans, 1972, p. 126). In the modern "ever-deepening ocean of news" (Thompson, 2009, p. 1) the need for the news to be "properly set in context" (Randall, 2000, p. VIII) is becoming ever greater. Knowledge is created "by relating new fact to what we already know" (Evans, 1972, p. 144), but reporters often forget that the reader is not a "professional digester of everything the paper has ever printed on the subject", and while journalists were "immersing" themselves in writing a story, the reader "has been mending the roads, or auditing accounts, or singing



grand opera,” and thus failing to prepare to understand the news (ibid, p. 141). The professionalism of news reporters can be judged by how successfully they are “knitting facts to contexts” (Scheuer, 2007, p. 1).

Many authors come to the conclusion that what is needed is “not more detail, but more context and explanation” (Lewis, Cushion, & Thomas, 2005, p. 475); not more facts and news, but “distilling the news into an ever-richer contextual record” so that journalism is transformed into “something that doesn’t need to be decoded, but instead helps us make sense of what’s happening in our world” (Thompson, 2009, p. 1). Thompson added that while news organisations possessed contextual information in abundance, they failed to share it with the readers by cutting it into “snippets that they buried within oodles of inscrutable news reports” (ibid). Thompson wrote that he was lost by the traditional media organisation that failed to enlighten him adding that “young news consumers like me” are flocking to another source of news, which is “structured around the context” (ibid).

A recent study by the Associated Press confirmed what Thompson described so vividly: contextualisation of news is especially important for younger readers who are “overloaded with facts and updates” and have “trouble moving more deeply into the background and resolution of news stories” (*A new model for news. Studying the deep structure of young-adult news consumption*, 2008, p. 3). Lack or absence of context can create several problems:

1. The story may mislead the uninformed and will look foolish for the informed readers:

Today stories reporting simply that the mayor praised the police at the Garden Club luncheon seem inadequate — even foolish — if the police are in fact entangled in a corruption scandal; the mayor’s comments are clearly political rhetoric and come in response to some recent attack by his critics (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001, p. 43).

2. It may create false perceptions of reality among news consumers. Randall (1996) refers to one story published in the 1980s by the *New York Daily Post*, in which all the small details of every little crime on a slow news day were assembled together without any context “in one breathless story under the headline *Mayhem on Our Streets*” (p. 19). Randall gave a name to such a technique as a “degenerate form” of the “artful technique of presenting the mundane as the unusual” (ibid). Randall admits that such practices are widespread, but it does not make it a standard to follow:

A feature of such dishonest ingenuity is that a broadly accurate series of parts add up to a totally inaccurate whole. And it is not just admired on the tabloid papers where it originated. It has a wide influence on what is thought to be smart, slick behaviour everywhere. Sleight of hand with the facts and judiciously selecting information that is then presented out of its true setting is often copied, albeit in a milder form, throughout journalism. Part of this is

unavoidable because any reality, which by its very nature is messy and complicated, has to be simplified, or at least have language and coherence imposed upon it, when it is related in words. A lot of journalism, however, willfully omits context and unduly magnifies this effect for the sake of rendering reality in a more dramatic way (Randall, 2000, p. 16-17).

In another example, Randall shows how absence of comparison of news to the norm or to what is usual can overdramatise the situation:

Many stories about the dangers of pesticides might be a little more intelligent and accurate if they also compared the risks to the amount of naturally occurring pesticidal chemicals found in basil, peanuts and mushrooms (Randall, 2000, p. 44).

3. It makes readers waste their time looking for the context somewhere else. David Brugger, a US consultant for media policy, who used to be president of the Association of Public Television Stations and senior vice-president for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, wrote in his response to a column at poynter.org in which controversies in writing contexts were discussed, that missing context turns him to the web to look for it:

My most noted criticism of the popular press is the lack of context for most stories. It is why I listen to long form programming on NPR and view PBS documentaries, as well as tend to see the Internet as my source for multiple sources. That way I can understand issues with enough information to believe I may be able to explain a subject. I have also come to read English-language newspapers around the world for international issues and perspectives on US policies. The lack of international news and any context for what little is reported is probably for me the second major failing (Brugger, 2004).

4. If journalists are avoiding context they do not make politics and public affairs more understandable for the general public, while admitting to news only those who are already “inside the ‘virtuous circle’” (Lewis et al., 2005). The level of understanding of news stories by the general public is fairly low, a number of authors write. Philo (2002) blames “little understanding of events in the developing world or of major international institutions or relationships” on the deficient television coverage that while concentrating on “dramatic, violent and tragic images” gives “little context or explanation to the events that are being portrayed” (p. 185).
5. If local news in the globalisation era is not properly set in the international context, the audience is kept in the dark and it may have an effect on public opinion, “promoting an intellectual protectionism that slams the door shut on the world outside” (Rolston & McLaughlin, 2004). Such protectionism especially benefits global media corporations, which are happy that the news consumers are unaware of the global trends and do not ask awkward questions (Monbiot, 2003).

One point of logical controversy is how much context is needed in a news story and how to strike the balance between insufficient context and too much context. The amount of context in a story should depend on the audience. For example, Reuters writes for “financial professionals and for well-educated, world-interested, politically and financially aware general readers who often obtain news from several sources” (*Reuters handbook of journalism*, 2008) which means that some stories are written only for professionals and others may be read by anybody. The handbook warns that in case the story has to “travel beyond your own country and market” it often “needs a higher level of context and background” (ibid, p. 25).

However, instructional information on how to write contexts is scarce, the definitions of contexts are confusing and their contents and functions overlapping. The classification of contexts is not available in literature, making instruction difficult. Even those authors who talk about the high significance of contexts do not explain them at length. For instance, writing that “[news] stories are rarely unique eruptions of fate: they belong in a continuum,” Randall (2000, p. 44) does not look closely into all possible continuums that could be used by reporters so that the news makes complete sense to the reader. Many other authors who also talk about a larger picture in which news should be presented do not sufficiently break down this picture into all possible dimensions to be used for instructional purposes. Historical context, which is often called background, is one type of a continuum which deals with the past. Another type is a global economic context, the importance of which is described by Schiffrin (2006). Schiffrin pointed out that some issues such as privatisations, trade, energy contracts, corporate social responsibility and macroeconomic policies should be given a global economic perspective because they are very much intertwined in the contemporary globalised world.

It is not enough to know about your local company any more. You also need to know about global trends in your sector in which your local company operates... Writing effectively about a local privatization or banking crisis means having to know about what has happened in other countries. This is necessary as it helps journalists understand what will work in their country and what won't work so they can explain it to the public and help set the policy agenda (Schiffrin, 2006, p. 185).

A group of British authors point at the existence of different types of contexts that “allow audiences to understand or appreciate the significance of a story” (Lewis et al., 2005, p. 473). But they list only a few types of contexts: sketching out the big picture, providing a historical/narrative context and giving meaningful comparisons and say that their use is uncommon.

### 3.4.1.1. Different types of contexts: Confusions and overlapping

Not only is ‘context’ inadequately defined in the journalistic educational literature, the contents and even names of various types of context overlap. In some cases understanding of context is confusing. For example, in a section headlined ‘Always give enough context’ McKane (2006) suggests that context is a timeframe and a place frame. She gives the following example: “‘Seven joyriders were killed’ means nothing unless you add ‘in the past year, in Britain’” (p. 88). But the ‘past year’ is the answer to the ‘when’ question, and ‘in Britain’ – the answer to the ‘where’ question. This information is obviously not contextual, but part of the basic 4W’s and H of news. To understand the larger picture the audience apparently needs to know the numbers of joyriders who have been killed in the preceding year or years to be able to compare the figures and see the trend. Several types of contexts that have been identified in available literature are presented in Table 10.

**Table 10. Context types and their location in news stories as suggested by journalism experts**

<i>Elements</i>	<i>Descriptions, authors. The identifying description or content of the type of a context are italicised where possible</i>	<i>Function, content, Location, descriptors</i>
Context	<p>Context is the world that the audience and paper inhabit (Randall, 2000)</p> <p>If the story is not put into context, it could be dull because it does not connect with the world of the reader. It is our task not just to report information, but to put it into a context that reveals its significance (Murray, 2000)</p> <p>Use of statistics or other figures to put anecdotal evidence into context (Scanlan, 2000)</p> <p>However, accurate is each little part of the story, the whole thing is true to the spirit and atmosphere of the situation or events only if background and context are added (Randall, 2000)</p> <p>Context is needed to judge rarity as a newsworthiness criterion. It explains why a rural Danish weekly will rate the story of a shooting far higher than a New York tabloid would. In one place it is the exception, in the other it is an event that happens many times a day (Randall, 2000)</p> <p>Approaching the story from different perspectives allows the reader to hear more points of view (Harrower, 2007)</p> <p>Context should explain the significance of the story (<i>Reuters handbook of journalism</i>, 2008)</p> <p>Journalists should put spot stories in context with quotes,</p>	<p>Makes news interesting, significant, credible, shows its rarity</p> <p>Larger picture</p> <p>Comparisons</p> <p>Statistics or other figures</p> <p>Different perspectives</p> <p>Quotes, colour, background</p> <p>Historical context</p> <p>Meaningful comparisons</p>

	<p>colour and background (<i>Reuters handbook of journalism</i>, 2008)</p> <p>Different types of context “allow audiences to understand or appreciate the significance of a story” (Lewis et al., 2005, p. 473). The authors list only a few types of context: “sketching out the big picture, providing a historical/narrative context or giving meaningful comparisons” (ibid).</p>	
Assessment	<p>This notion is used in Evans (1972) without giving a definition. Out of the examples presented in his book, ‘assessment’ is a block which formulates the <i>uniqueness and the significance</i> of the news event. For example, in a story about an American military policeman who pulled a wounded refugee over the Berlin Wall after he threw a tear-gas grenade to make East German guards release the refugee, the assessment is given in the last paragraph: “It was the <i>longest</i><sup>66</sup> battle since the Wall went up and the <i>most serious</i> in that it was the <i>first time</i> a US soldier had gone into action to save a refugee” (ibid, p. 113).</p>	<p>Uniqueness Significance</p>
Nut graf (nut graph)	<p>A paragraph that says <i>what this whole story is about</i> and why you should read it. It’s a flag to the reader, high up in the story. If you read no farther, you know what that story’s about (Ken Wells, editor at The Wall Street Journal, quoted by Scanlan, 2000, p. 161)</p> <p>A paragraph or paragraphs after the intro. To understand the story, it has to be put in context. The context may be a series of arson fires, an election in which abortion has become an issue, a road that has caused many accidents, a school bond that has been turned down many times causing the school to lose its accreditation, a treatment for a little-known but spreading disease that is killing children. The facts, quotations, anecdotes, actions, reported in the story need to be <i>part of a larger significance, to be seen in the perspective of other information</i> if the reader is to understand and care (Murray, 2000)</p> <p>Although the nut graf approach is most often associated with trend stories, analytical pieces and news features, reporters also employ it to bring drama and context to breaking news (Scanlan, 2000)</p> <p>Context section called ‘nut graf’ gives readers a <i>reason to care</i> (Scanlan, 2000)</p> <p>It often includes supporting material so that readers can see why the story is <i>important</i> (Scanlan, 2000)</p> <p>‘Nut graf’ summarises <i>the essence, or “nut”, of the story’s theme</i></p> <p>It often tells readers why the story is <i>timely</i> (Scanlan,</p>	<p>Is usually used in news starting with the anecdotal intro</p> <p>Nutshell, what the story is about</p> <p>Meaning Significance</p> <p>Larger picture of similar issues</p> <p>Brings drama and context</p> <p>Gives reason to care</p> <p>Importance</p> <p>Tells why the story is timely</p> <p>Provides transition from the intro</p> <p>Supplements missing 5W from the intro</p> <p>A ‘So what’ paragraph</p>

<sup>66</sup> Words which assess the uniqueness of the news event are highlighted here.

	<p>2000)</p> <p>In a ‘nut graf’ story, which starts from an anecdotal intro, it <i>provides a transition from the intro and explains the intro and its connection to the rest of the story</i> (Scanlan, 2000)</p> <p>It is used to emphasise explanation over information and understanding over knowledge (Scanlan, 2000)</p> <p>Nut graf is named ‘you may have wondered <i>why we invited you to this party?</i>’ section by <i>The Philadelphia Inquirer</i> (Scanlan, 2000)</p> <p>Nut graf is not an obligation for an article, but most news article need it to <i>summarise the story’s meaning</i> and what the reader can expect to learn by reading further and appears before the jump (Weiss, 2003)</p> <p>Nut graf is used in stories that have no summary intros and readers wonder <i>what the story is about</i>. It <i>condenses the story idea into a nutshell</i>. For news stories nut graf may be fulfilling three duties: supplementing any of the 5Ws missing from the intro; provide background for the action described in the intro; add a supporting quote (Harrower, 2007)</p> <p>Without a nut graf, impatient readers may wonder <i>What’s the point?</i> and drift away, no matter how clever your lead is (Harrower, 2007)</p> <p>Nut graf is a sentence or paragraph that <i>states the focus — the main point — of the story</i>. It should <i>tell in a nutshell what the story is about and why it is newsworthy</i>. In a hard-news story with a direct summary lead, the lead contains the focus, so you don’t need a separate nut graph. But the nut graph is crucial when a story starts with a feature lead because the reader has to wait for a few paragraphs to find out the reason for the story. The nut graf should be placed high in the story, generally by the third to fifth paragraph, but if the intro is very compelling, the nut graf could come later. The nut graf essentially <i>plays the role of the intro in stories with anecdotal intros</i> (Rich, 2009)</p> <p>The nut graf follows the intro and contains <i>additional details, quotes from sources, statistics, background, or other information</i>. These are added to the article in order of importance, so that the least important items are at the bottom (Arnold &amp; Cook, 2010).</p> <p>Nut graf, aka <i>point statement</i>, aka <i>focus graf</i> (Rich, 2009)</p>	<p>Explains why the story is newsworthy</p> <p>Background</p> <p>Plays the role of the intro in stories with anecdotal intros</p> <p>Supports quote</p> <p>Additional details</p> <p>Statistics</p> <p>Same as ‘point statements’ or ‘focus graf’</p>
Background	<p>Background is written to make the story meaningful to the new reader (Evans, 1972)</p> <p>Sentences in a news story that explain important elements. Background can explain something technical or provide details that were reported in earlier stories</p>	<p>Provides meaning</p> <p>Explanations of important elements</p>

	<p>(Itule &amp; Anderson, 1991)</p> <p>Even breaking news stories need background paragraphs to explain what happened before. For example, in a story on the first day of a murder trial, the writer may use the third, fourth and fifth paragraphs to give details of the crime (Itule &amp; Anderson, 1991)</p> <p>Background usually summarises the history as events unfold in breaking stories (Lorenz &amp; Vivian, 1996).</p> <p>Is there any history or background the reader needs in order to understand how a problem or action occurred? Put the story in perspective. If the story is about a fire, accident or crime, how many other incidents of this type have occurred in the community recently? (Rich, 2009)</p> <p>History is the background paragraph information that is needed in many stories to bring the reader quickly up to speed before telling him or her about the newest development (Tucker, 2008).</p> <p>Background should not dominate in a news story. It should be given succinctly, in passing, without referring to a lot of previously reported facts (Evans, 1972)</p> <p>The amount of background information in news stories will differ from story to story. Some will need it to make the report intelligible (Keeble, 1994)</p> <p>Incorrect or missing background causes a false account (Randall, 2000)</p> <p>If essential background is cut, the story may not work (Grundy, 2007)</p> <p>In the beginning of the story the background is given only to make the latest developments meaningful to a new reader. Other background may be given later in the story. Put the background in the third paragraph (Evans, 1972)</p> <p>Historical material, background material which has no immediacy of time or place and which contains no news points should be omitted or relegated to a late paragraph in the news story. It must never appear in the intro of a news story where it would assume an undue importance and also delay the real news (Aitchison, 1988)</p> <p>In the inverted pyramid news stories use the third paragraph and more paragraphs if necessary, to provide background which explains things for readers (Itule &amp; Anderson, 1991)</p> <p>Background should not be in the intro. Readers do not want to wade through background before arriving at the main point (Keeble, 1994)</p> <p>Background is the least important material that is situated briefly at the bottom of the inverted pyramid (Keeble, 1994)</p>	<p>History</p> <p>Larger picture of similar issues or occurrences</p> <p>Statistics</p> <p>Makes news intelligible and credible</p> <p><b>Location:</b></p> <p>Should not be in the intro</p> <p>Located from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> paragraphs</p> <p>Key background should be given high in the story, and may be viewed by using parenthetical phrases in the middle of sentences, background with no immediacy function should be lowered to the bottom of the story</p>
--	---	--

	<p>Background is situated at the third section of the inverted pyramid after the intro, new source sections and before the return to source from intro fourth section (Keeble, 1994)</p> <p>Placing of background can occur anywhere; in some it will occur at the end, in others it may occur near the start (Keeble, 1994)</p> <p>The placement of the background depends on the story. The more significant is the background, the closer to the intro it should be placed (Grundy, 2007)</p> <p>Background can be viewed by using parenthetical phrases in the middle of sentences to insert the history as the main story proceeds. The alternative is to write a paragraph or two at the end of the story (Tucker, 2008).</p> <p>The poor news writer who ignores these strategies usually ends up with a par or two of history right up there in paragraphs two and three of the story. The result: the impact of the intro (with its new angle) is deadened by a logjam of “old” facts and hangs there without support until the reporter gets the history retold and returns to the information that supports that angle (Tucker, 2008).</p>	
Explanatory material	<p>It is what makes even the most complicated stories understandable (Fedler, Bender, Davenport, &amp; Drager, 2005)</p> <p>Terms could be explained in concepts or comparisons (Rich, 2009)</p> <p>It can explain the background: A phrase, a sentence, or even a short paragraph of explanatory material should be inserted if this is needed to remind readers of the origin of the story (Aitchison, 1988)</p> <p>It can explain words that are unfamiliar: if words are used that are not part of everyday conversation journalists must immediately define them, or else the story will annoy as well as puzzle (Fedler et al., 2005). The author writes that the explanations should use simpler words instead of complicated ones. Otherwise, he suggests three techniques to explain the unfamiliar:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- place a brief explanation in parentheses</li> <li>- place the explanation immediately after the unfamiliar name or term, setting it off with a colon, comma or dash</li> <li>- place the explanation in the next sentence.</li> </ul> <p>Fedler also suggests that comparisons should be used to explain large numbers and unfamiliar concepts. For example, converting numbers into something related to everyday life, or comparing concepts with things that are familiar.</p> <p>It can explain the situation or the problem within which</p>	<p>Explanation of complications in stories</p> <p>Explanation of background (history)</p> <p>Explanation of unfamiliar words</p> <p>Comparisons to explain large numbers and unfamiliar concepts</p> <p>Explanation of the situation or the problem within which the news unfolds</p>



	<p>the news unfolds: If politicians distort, duck and dodge the truth, journalists should provide rebuttal by a declarative sentence that reflects the journalist's authority and knowledge (not a quote from an opponent, which turns the discussion into a he-said, she-said mudbath) (Harrower, 2007)</p> <p>Explain technical terms unless your story is uniquely for a specialist audience that understands them (<i>Reuters handbook of journalism</i>, 2008)</p> <p>Explanations are better placed as appositive, so that they become clear from the context, rather than to put them in a separate graph as if saying to readers that if they are "too dumb to know what this means, here's a definition" (Lorenz &amp; Vivian, 1996, p. 181). Example in which the authors bolded the explanation: "Analysis found that men with high blood levels of alpha-linolenic acid, <b>a fatty acid that researchers say comes from red meat</b>, ran two to three times the risk of prostate cancer as men with low blood (sic) levels of the acid"</p>	
Comparisons	Important complex issues should be supplied with relevant comparisons that would help the interpretation of news. For example, local issues may be compared to how similar occurrences work globally (Schiffrin, 2006).	Comparisons
Wider frames of reference	Give evaluative meaning to events and reports of events which are candidates for treatment as news (McQuail, 1992)	Larger picture

As can be seen from this table, the definitions 'context', 'nut graf', 'background' and 'explanatory material' in many cases are used interchangeably. The content of the first three is to provide larger pictures and statistics, and all four can provide background. Background, in most cases, is history or historical context. At least two of the four types in different combinations are said to show interest, significance, raise credibility of news and provide comparisons and context. Such overlapping of functions, names and content means that there is no shared understanding in the news writing industry about what exactly is context and what its different types entail.

Many types of contexts can be found in published news articles, but none of the available textbooks list all or even most possible options. There is also a need to classify and label these contexts so that they can be outlined in instructional materials to train journalists. One excellent example of the context-rich story is used in the book *Reporting and writing* (Scanlan, 2000). The author of the story, Mark Fritz, won a Pulitzer prize for his reporting. The suggested breakdown of the different types of contexts will be compared with the analysis made by Scanlan.

The story begins with a powerful intro that “sets a horrific scene, bringing the reader face-to-face with the massacred victims in an African village” (Scanlan, 2000, p. 169) (see the whole story in Appendix 7):

KARUBAMBA, Rwanda (AP) -- Nobody lives here any more.

Not the expectant mothers huddled outside the maternity clinic, not the families squeezed into the church, not the man who lies rotting in a schoolroom beneath a chalkboard map of Africa.

Everybody here is dead. Karubamba is a vision from hell, a flesh-and-bone junkyard of human wreckage, an obscene slaughterhouse that has fallen silent save for the roaring buzz of flies the size of honeybees.

With silent shrieks of agony locked on decaying faces, hundreds of bodies line the streets and fill the tidy brick buildings of this village, most of them in the sprawling Roman Catholic complex of classrooms and clinics at Karubamba’s stilled heart.

Scanlan writes (ibid, p. 170) that in the intro “the vivid details answer the questions:

"Where?" and "What?" and "Who?" in a powerful fashion that draws the reader into the story.

Fritz’s lead leaves unaddressed the "How?" and "Why?" Had he continued to describe the massacre, there’s a good chance the reader would become frustrated” and this is where the nut graf starts. Five paragraphs of what Scanlan labelled ‘nut graf’ are broken down in Table 11.

**Table 11. Analysis of the contents of the nut graf in the story by a Pulitzer prize winner Mark Fritz**

<i>Blocks of text</i>	<i>Scanlan’s analysis of the nut graf</i>	<i>Suggested breakdown in smaller contextual blocks with analysis of their contents and suggested names<sup>a</sup> of the blocks (in bold)</i>
<i>Karubamba is just one breathtakingly awful example of the mayhem<sup>b</sup> that has made little Rwanda the <u>world’s most ghastly</u> killing ground.</i>	<p>Fritz backs up to provide context for the scene in the intro, like a filmmaker drawing back from a close-up to a wide-angle shot.</p> <p>This is the "nut section," that provides the background by addressing "How?" and "Why?" the scene described in the lead came to be.</p>	<p><i>Italicised<sup>b</sup></i>: contextual block that situates the news in the system of similar events. In this story the system is the massacre in Rwanda and the block shows that the massacre is not unique or rare (<b>can be labelled ‘systemic’ context, in which the system is the scope of mayhem in Rwanda</b>)</p> <p><b>Bold (including underlined and italicised bold)</b>: Block showing the problem, within which news is unfolding (<b>explanation of the importance of news, criterion of the ‘Newsworthiness’ category</b>)</p> <p><u><b>Underlined bold</b></u>: Uniqueness of the news (<b>criterion of the ‘Newsworthiness’ category</b>)</p> <p><i><b>Italicised bold</b></i>: Contextual information</p>

		that shows international positioning of news or the situation in which news unfolds ( <b>can be labelled ‘international context’</b> )
<i>Karubamba, 30 miles northeast of Kigali, the capital, died April 11, six days after</i> <b>Rwanda President Juvenal Habyarimana</b> , a member of the Hutu tribe, <b>was killed in a plane crash whose cause is still undetermined.</b>		Italicised: contextual block that locates the ‘where’ information geographically ( <b>can be labelled ‘geographical context’</b> )  Bold: contextual block that links the news to another event, which is in some important way linked to the news though may not be directly connected. It is not the answer to the ‘why’ question ( <b>can be labelled ‘event context’</b> )
The paranoia and suspicion surrounding the crash blew the lid off decades of complex ethnic, social and political hatreds. It ignited a murderous spree by extremists from the majority Hutus against rival Tutsis and those Hutus who had opposed the government.		Contextual block elaborating on the background (history) of the tragedy, namely on the block ‘why’ ( <b>background, or historical context</b> )
This awesome wave of remorseless mayhem has claimed 100,000 to 200,000 lives, say U.N. and other relief groups.		Contextual block that provides the size of the whole system of which this news is part of. The figures given in this block elaborate on the systemic context, which is given in general in the intro ( <b>can be labelled ‘systemic context’, in which the system is the number of victims in Rwanda</b> )
Many were cut down while cowering in places traditionally thought safe havens: churches, schools, relief agencies.		Contextual block elaborating on the history of the tragedy, namely on the blocks ‘how’ and ‘why’ ( <b>background</b> )

Notes:

<sup>a</sup> Name of different contexts are suggested by this researcher.

<sup>b</sup> Here and further in this column: Formatting tools including ‘underlined’, ‘italicised’ and ‘bold’ are used to single out different types of context.

Scanlan (2000) does not give more detailed explanation of what the nut graf consists of in this example, saying only that it provides background by addressing ‘how’ and ‘why’. Such analysis is not instructional enough to give inexperienced reporters a useful range of tools to write meaningful context or apply a thematic frame in the understanding of Iyengar (1991). The nut graf in Scanlan’s understanding consists in this story of five paragraphs which are not broken down. Our analysis allowed the identification of 4 types of contexts present in this text and two elements of the ‘Newsworthiness’ category (‘uniqueness’ and ‘problem in which news unfolds’ that is related to ‘importance’) that apparently also serve as contextual elements :

- problem in which news unfolds
- uniqueness
- systemic context
- international context
- geographical context
- event context.

None of these six types have been clearly identified in journalism educational literature as contextual types. Of these, the geographical context is perhaps the easiest one as it only specifies the geographical position of the place of news against a better known place.

The fact that the first two of the six elements listed above are elements in the ‘Newsworthiness’ category means that their content overlaps with content of the ‘context’ criterion in the ‘Meaning’ category. The fact that both these elements can be also equally used as contextual elements — at least, in a text such as this — creates a problem for the construction of the NTA because according to the logic of its creation, there should be no overlapping of the elements.

To avoid overlapping it was decided to leave only those elements in the ‘context’ criterion which are not already accounted for in the ‘Newsworthiness’ category. Therefore, four of the six elements — ‘systemic’, ‘international’, ‘geographical’ and ‘event’ contexts — will be used for instruction and training of the ‘context’ criterion. However, they will not be specified in the NTA1 for space reasons.

The suggested types of contexts can contribute to the breaking down of the notion of the ‘larger picture’ and help news reporters to apply a thematic frame to complex news. Clearly not all possible types have been used in this text, but it was hoped that this incomplete taxonomy can serve as a basis to improve it further in the future research.

### 3.4.1.2. Levels of quality in the ‘context’ criterion

It was especially difficult to assign performances in this criterion of the NTA to different levels of quality for several reasons, including the vagueness of the notion and the lack of instruction and examples that would guide such assignment. Firstly, the generic term ‘context’ was chosen as the name of the criterion rather than ‘nut graf’ or ‘background’, because ‘nut graf’ more logically belongs to stories with an anecdotal intro and has no specific features which would be different to the notion of ‘context’. The ‘background’ definition was dropped because it is more often linked to historical context than to the larger picture which could give meaning to news. Secondly, it should be noted that for space reasons and also because of the incomplete taxonomy of various contexts, ‘context’ as a criterion in the NTA will not be broken into types of contexts, and the creation of the taxonomy has been delayed in this research to be developed in the experimental part. Thirdly, three main structural elements were considered to help with formulation of the descriptors in the ‘context’ criterion: the content quality of the context, its volume, and its placement.

To identify the ‘outstanding’ level of quality in this criterion, the notion of thematic framing was used (Iyengar, 1991) with the interpretation that applying rich multiple contexts in news stories are more likely to stimulate informed citizenship than the simplest types of contexts, such as geographic or historical. Therefore, the ‘good’ level implies that some contexts are used that give news meaning, the ‘outstanding’ level suggests that multiple contexts are used, and the ‘inappropriate’ level is the interpretation of the episodic framing in which news is delivered as a single occurrence. Descriptors for the other levels of quality were formulated with the help of the guidelines in section 1.4.3.5.

### 3.4.2. *Explanations*

Despite the growing demand to include explanations in news texts, some authors insist that news reports should be just factual and simple and need no explanations beyond what, where and when news occurred. For instance, experts in mass communication Melvin DeFleur and Everette Dennis (2002) write that news reports should make “few intellectual demands”:

Journalists have little confidence in the willingness of the average citizen to linger over complex details or sophisticated analyses. Many maintain that in writing stories they observe the KISS (Keep it Simple, Stupid) system (ibid, p. 83).

However, “[g]ood journalism reports the news, great journalism explains it,” writes Harrower (2007, p. 37). A good story provides answers to the audience’s questions ‘why’, ‘how’ and ‘what happens next’ and journalists need to apply more effort and professionalism to reporting than to pass on basic facts (Geisler, 2009; Scanlan, 2000). Especially important, and most especially for the newspaper industry, is providing in-depth analysis on news from the

government and on civic affairs to help create an informed citizenry even if it takes extra effort. To make important news interesting and understandable, such stories require good writing skills, and “these are the skills where the newspaper industry should have an advantage” (Bridges & Bridges, 1997, p. 234-235).

‘Explanation’ is a broad notion, but as a criterion of the quality of news writing it will be used in this research in a narrow sense. The content of this criterion is limited to the answers to the following questions: Why? How? What happens next? What may happen next? It also includes other necessary issues needed to provide explanation and analysis of news. However, because including all the possible meaning of the notion ‘explanation’ in one criteria would make it unwieldy, the content of the ‘explanations’ criterion excludes the answer to the questions ‘Why news is important?’ or ‘Why should we care?’ or ‘So what?’ (which is the content of the ‘importance’ criterion in the ‘Newsworthiness’ category), and ‘What does news mean?’ (which is the content of the impact criterion in the ‘Meaning’ category). Contextual elements, which are also explanations, are excluded from this criterion because they are part of the ‘context’ criterion in the ‘Meaning’ category.

#### **3.4.2.1. Why did it happen?**

‘Why?’ and ‘How?’ are part of the ‘big five’ questions which are usually abbreviated as 4W’s and H.<sup>67</sup> Explanations of ‘why?’ and ‘how?’ news occurred are more important than getting ‘who?’, ‘what?’ and ‘where?’ information, considers Geisler (2009). She also adds some other ‘why?’ and ‘how?’ questions to the basic set:

Who, what and where are the product of stenography — recording the obvious. Why and how — plus why not, what else, what more, and in what context — are born of critical thinking. That takes talent and time and that’s why it is valuable to viewers (ibid, p. 1).

Good reporters go beyond the basic explanations of how or why news happened, but explain also ‘How does it work?’, ‘How did things go wrong?’, ‘How was the story revealed?’, ‘Why are people behaving this way?’, ‘Why do the forces care so deeply?’. For space reasons all these issues will not be elaborated on in this section, and only one part of possible explanations — the ‘why did it happen?’ — will be looked at in-depth as an example of what range of content could be expected in this criterion.

“‘Why’ is what makes news meaningful,” wrote Harrower (2007, p. 37). But despite the apparent importance of ‘why’ explanations many journalists fail to find an answer to the

---

<sup>67</sup> ‘Who?’, ‘What?’ and ‘When?’ are the other three questions and part of the ‘comprehensiveness’ criteria in the ‘Credibility and factual quality’ category (see section 3.3.3)

‘why’ question. Of course, quickly finding such an answer for a breaking news story is difficult (Harrower, 2007). However, many reporters do not even look for such an answer. For example, in a study of the coverage of anti-war protests and pro-war demonstrations in the United States before and during the war in Iraq, in which news texts in the major US news organisations, including the Associated Press, were analysed, Luther & Miller (2005) found that news organisations failed to convey the crucial information to the public — why people protested against the campaign or supported it — focusing instead on elements of drama, and not on the “central issues that the demonstrators attempted to communicate”:

The important underlying reasons why the demonstrators were either for or against the war were overwhelmingly missed by the news organizations. The idea that the pro-war organizations saw a definite threat from Iraqi nuclear or biological weapons was not emphasized, nor was the anti-war organizations’ notion that the ultimate motive behind the war was US desire for economic resources in other nations. By choosing an event orientation and neglecting the significant arguments made by the pro-war and anti-war groups, the news organizations might have been doing a disservice to these groups” (Luther & Miller, 2005, p. 90) .

These journalists overlooked straightforward information which they could have obtained by asking the direct question ‘Why?’ But sometimes answers to the ‘why?’, ‘how?’, and ‘what happens next?’ questions are not on the surface and more substantial effort is needed to find them.

In reporting be sure to dig out why actions were taken originally. Don’t infer. Don’t assume (Tom Rosenstiel cited in Parks, 2006).

Superficial coverage of the ‘why’ issue and not getting to the core of the reason was mentioned by Manning (2001). He referred to the case in 1989, when the *Sun* tabloid newspaper explained the reason for the death of about a hundred Liverpool soccer fans in a stampede in Hillsborough as the “drunken and rowdy behaviour on the part of the fans themselves” (Manning, 2001, p. 47). The follow-up reporting revealed that the real cause of the disaster was “serious errors” made by the organisers of the match. Such a failure to provide a relevant explanation caused a drop in the circulation of the *Sun* in Liverpool (ibid). The author warns about the dangers of “employing ‘essentialist’ modes of explanation” and calls for the need to be “sensitive to the multiple determinations and interplays which make up most aspects of social reality” (ibid).

Therefore, in answering basic questions ‘why’, ‘how’ and ‘what happens next’, it is important to look deeper into the roots of news, and not limit reporting to getting superficial information. Therefore, the descriptors were formulated the following way:

**‘unacceptable’:** no explanations are provided, which makes it hard or impossible to grasp news, or assumptions are used instead of the explanations

**‘acceptable’:** ‘why did it happen?’, ‘how?’, ‘what happens next?’ and other important issues are not sufficiently explained

**‘good’:** story sufficiently explains important issues including ‘why did it happen?’, ‘how?’ and ‘what happens next?’ where necessary

### **3.4.2.2. Analysis**

In-depth explanation of important news from the government, and on civic affairs, helps create an informed citizenry (Bridges & Bridges, 1997). Reuters reporters are encouraged to conduct analysis even in breaking news, especially on ‘what may happen next’:

Real-time analysis adds depth to breaking news. Information users are under increasing pressure to take a view on events as soon as they occur so what is likely to happen is often more important for clients than what has already happened (*Reuters handbook of journalism*, 2008).

Such coverage requires time, but explanations in stories are important. To make the news interesting and understandable, such stories require good writing skills, and “these are the skills where the newspaper industry should have an advantage” (Bridges & Bridges, 1997, p. 234-235). Li & Izard (2003) agree, arguing that newspapers should concentrate more on providing in-depth news stories to go beyond what already has been covered by TV, especially when covering crises. As newspaper reporters have more time than their TV counterparts, they can deal with more aspects regarding people’s lives and develop the political frame for important stories (ibid). Vultee & Wilkins (2004) point out that as time passes after the initial phase of a “crisis event-oriented, spot stories which often lack meaning”, spot reporting “begins to give way to more in-depth coverage.”

Such coverage should include wide-ranging debate, analysis and commentary from diverse perspectives including from highly qualified sources who provide multiple perspectives on the issue (Dimitrova & Strömbäck, 2009). Experts, including, for example, academics, “tend to increase the credibility of news and provide ‘unbiased’ viewpoints” (ibid).

Analysis should also include not only domestic, but foreign sources and experts (Hayes, Guardino, 2010). It was news coverage with the lack of wide-ranging debate, analysis and commentary from diverse perspectives that denied the US public the opportunity to weigh the claims of the pro-war and anti-war parties prior to invading Iraq in 2003 (Hayes & Guardino, 2010). The authors wrote that while the Bush administration officials were given the floor in the news frequently, the opposition was nearly unheard. They suggest that the range of sources should not only include the main sides of the controversy, but also include non-US views on the domestic policy debates, as the opposition to the war from Europe, particularly from France, was fierce, but not reported in the United States. At the same time absence of explanation or analysis in the news leaves the origins of events unexplored. Filled with mysteries, melodrama, and stereotypes and short on analysis and explanations, the daily news provides little solid basis for critical thinking or effective action (Bennett, 1997).



Not every story is worth in-depth reporting, although many communication scholars who research the content of news criticise it “for failure to provide a fuller, more serious, and more analytical diet of news” (Zaller, 2003, p. 116). Zaller suggests that news should alert busy citizens only to the events, important in their public lives as opposed to demand the full coverage of matters of little impact:

[N]ews should provide information in the manner of attention-getting ‘burglar alarms’ about acute problems, rather than ‘police patrols’ over vast areas that pose no immediate problems (ibid).

Analysis of literature helped to formulate the following descriptors for the NTA:

**‘outstanding’**: beyond the descriptions in the ‘good’ level, the story analyses important issues in depth using the variety of best sources including, where relevant, on the rationale behind important issues addressed in the story; and has the potential to stimulate important discussions in society

**‘inappropriate’**: story is in-depth on news which is not worth such coverage

### **3.4.2.3. Location of the explanatory information**

Generally the location of explanatory material is determined by its salience. The ‘why’ and ‘how’ can be placed in the intro as part of the 4W’s and H questions, but it is generally agreed that it is not necessary if they are not crucially important for the story. The location of the ‘what happens next’ block is also determined by the salience of the future action. It could be used higher up in a story, and it can also be one version of an ending of a news story (Rich, 2009).

### **3.4.3. Impact**

The notions of ‘impact’ and importance’ overlap in meaning probably more than any other elements of news writing presented in section 3.2 Appendix 4. Therefore, it was crucial for this research to define the content and clarify the differences between these two very popular notions for the purposes of online assessment and instruction.

As specified in Appendix 4, importance has been defined directly as the numbers of people who are affected by news or indirectly by the formulation of the importance of the news in a nutshell close to the top of a news story. Impact in this research will be understood as a way the story elaborates on the specific consequences that news caused, is causing, or will or can cause to its stakeholders and, in a broader context, to anyone or anything that can be directly affected by the news. The difference between the two notions is that while ‘importance’ is either an inherent or added element of any news story to be of publishable standard, news stories may or may not include elaboration of the impact of news on the lives, society, and stakeholders in news.

The specific explanations of the impact of news on various stakeholders including those who are directly affected, people, organisations, society, nation, world etc. will comprise the element ‘impact’ of the ‘meaning’ category. The difference in function between the two notions is that while ‘importance’ as the potential to affect great numbers of people is a basic criterion of selecting news for publication and also serves as a tool to concisely convey the significance of the story at the beginning so that people can make a choice whether or not to proceed reading, the story may or may not include quality explanations of the impact of news on the lives, society, and stakeholders in news.

But it is exactly the explanation of impact that helps to make important and complex news relevant to people (Bickler et al., 2004; Buttry, 2005; Granato, 1991; Rich, 2009; Scanlan, 2000). People are “bored and confused by complicated stories about hearings, partisan bickering and electioneering” and “want to know how they will be affected by government actions; they don’t want to keep track of every turn of the screw” (Harrower, 2007, p. 107). Explaining consequences is especially important when reporting on a conflict (Ozgunes, 2000; Parks, 2006). Granato (1991) includes impact into his definition of news:

News is a journalistic report to an audience about an expected or unexpected situation in which the public has a legitimate interest and which may bring about a change that will impact on people and on society (Granato, 1991, p. 29) (ibid, p. 29).

Scanlan similarly writes: “It is not enough to simply report events; the reporter has a responsibility to also help the reader understand why this information matters – or should” (Scanlan, 2000, p. 8). Without such explanation reporters may fail to reach people with important news, Scanlan writes, explaining that “[n]ews can easily take second place behind the demands of work, school, family and culture where there’s never enough time in the day” (p. 121). He cited a journalist contributor to his book, who said that to matter, news “has to filter in to me through this fog of personal concern” which are “bologna sandwiches ... the holes in my kids’ clothes, the puppy’s whining” (Scanlan, 2000, p. 121). Another contributor, Geneva Overholser, was quoted in the same book as saying: “any readers say they look to the paper not for notification that something happened, but for context, meaning, perspective. They want to know what difference it will make to them” (p. 9). Harrower (2007) quotes Mary Nesbitt, the US Readership Institute’s managing director, as saying that institutional stories which included reporting about meetings of city council, planning commission or school boards are “ignored unless the reporter makes it clear why it really matters” (p. 19).

#### **3.4.3.1. Stakeholders in news**

But matters for whom? News can cause a chain of consequences for various stakeholders:

- People and society. For instance, a scheduled tax cut will impact on individuals by permitting them to keep more of their wages. This in turn will impact on society as

some of this additional cash reaches the economy and creates a boom in the sale of consumer goods and housing (Granato, 1991).

Parks (2006, p. 45) gives three categories of people who have “a stake in the outcome of a given story” and need to be taken into account:

- official stakeholders, or people with power granted by government or other institutions
- civic stakeholders, or people or groups working in what they perceive to be the public interest, either for change or to protect a way of life they value
- personal stakeholders, or people or groups who could be directly affected physically, financially, or emotionally
- institutions in the area, major demographic or geographic groups or smaller subgroups (Rosenstiel et al., 2007)
- minorities, including people with disabilities, race, sexual or religious minorities (Tully, 2008).

Lee & Solomon (1990) add long-term health consequences for humans and other life forms to this list, considering placing high priority on short-term corporate profits as unhealthy reporting. It is also logical to suggest that not only people or groups, or even ‘other life forms’ hold stakes in the news. News can also affect society, world, environment and other structures and formations, matters, and issues, and this should be acknowledged while assessing ‘impact’ as a criterion of news writing.

As it is difficult to include all the direct and indirect stakeholders in the descriptors, the following logic was used:

In the ‘good’ level the formula should include not only direct stakeholders, but also a range of the most important objects and subjects, and suggest that the impact of news on other relevant issues is also considered: ‘direct stakeholders including people, minorities, society, organisations, environment, and other life forms, formations, and, if needed, on other relevant matters and issues’.

For the ‘inappropriate’ level the description of the stakeholders should be used in the narrow sense as main stakeholder or stakeholders.

For the ‘unacceptable’ level the range of shareholders is shortened to the minimum — people who can suffer from some dangerous news.

#### **3.4.3.2. What aspects does impact have?**

As already mentioned above, news may have impact that has already occurred, or is taking place at the time of the publication, or will take place some time in the future. It can also have “foreseeable consequences” (Fuller, 1996, p. 7) or eventual effect (Masterton, 1992). The impact news may have can be of different types, including physical, financial, economic or

political (Masterton, 1991). Masterton excludes only emotional effect noting that news that has no effect other than emotional falls into the category of human interest. However, including all these options and types in descriptors is to make them unwieldy. Only one aspect, which was termed by different authors ‘long-term consequences’, ‘foreseeable consequences’, or ‘eventual effect’ will be taken into account as part of the descriptor in the ‘outstanding’ level because such information is very important in case news has an inherent ‘time-bomb’, which should be revealed for people to make decisions.

The other options and types of impact have been saved for the SET where they will be duly covered as instruction modules.

#### **3.4.3.3. Does every news report need to explain the impact of news?**

Clearly not every item of news needs explanation of its impact, especially if it is clear from the ‘importance’ paragraph. Some simple or soft news may need no explanation of impact (Zaller, 2003). It is not necessarily appropriate in breaking news reports (Rich, 2009). Rich gives an example from a police story, published in the *Vancouver Sun*, in which the “impact is that the news happened in the community and should be of interest to local residents” (p. 41). Using the terminology of this research, the importance of the news is sufficiently explained in the nutshell high up in the story (emphasis added):

*Home users are now the top target for Internet attackers, who are launching increasingly sophisticated attacks. That’s the sobering warning from Symantec’s latest Internet security threat report, released today (ibid).*

This example shows, that out of all possible intros that could have been written based on the report, the journalist chose the one which specifies the direct threat to the readers of the newspaper, who, most probably, are using computers at home and can suffer consequences of the news. In such a story no further explanation of the impact is needed.

This section contributes to the creation of the ‘inappropriate’ level of quality: ‘impact is not given where necessary; or given where unnecessary or obvious’. The latter descriptor is designed to prevent journalists from wasting time on delivering idle information. Experience of this researcher shows that reporters, especially in the early stages of online training accompanied by assessment, sometimes blindly follow the word of the NTA in pursuit of scores.

#### **3.4.3.4. Location of the ‘impact’ information**

Journalistic authors often do not distinguish between explaining the importance of news in the intro or close to it and elaborating on the impact of news on stakeholders. The latter is usually part of explaining the meaning of the story and is placed closer to the bottom of an important story below the 4W’s and H part of the report. Distinguishing between the content of the two

notions and their placement is crucial for instructional purposes so that news reporters realise what exactly needs to be addressed in each of these two blocks of news, and where it should be placed.

The location issue is mentioned only in the ‘acceptable’ level of quality as ‘impact is explained before the 4W’s and H are covered’, because the placement is a secondary issue to the content. If the placement is wrong but every other element of the ‘impact’ is correct, the quality of ‘impact’ will still be ‘acceptable’, because the location of the explanation of impact cannot affect the assessment of this criterion to the extent that it would be marked as ‘unacceptable’ or ‘inappropriate’.

#### **3.4.3.5. Other issues in formulating the descriptors for the NTA**

As Iyengar’s understanding of framing appeared to be useful to formulate descriptors of other criteria in the ‘Meaning’ category, it was also applied to creating descriptors for the ‘impact’ criterion. Thematic framing, or using a frame larger than the issue as more advanced was used to formulate the ‘good’ and the ‘outstanding’ levels of quality, while episodic framing, or limiting the impact to just the main stakeholder, was applied to formulate the descriptors for the ‘acceptable’ level.

The last issue to be discussed before presenting the ‘impact’ criterion of the NTA in the table format, is the content of the ‘unacceptable’ level. While in many other criteria absence of the element is what is assessed as the ‘unacceptable’ level, in this element the guidelines in section 1.4.3.5 were used that specify that the descriptors in this level may outline performances that can cause grave consequences or result in encouraging asocial behaviour.

#### **Practical use**

News is “more meaningful and engaging if readers can use it in their lives”, developing participatory democracy, writes Parks (2006, p. 87). He adds: “ideally no story should be considered complete until the reader has at least one tool to move forward (ibid, p. 91). If news is not just information, but also “a platform for action”, the impact of the journalistic work “magnifies exponentially” (ibid, p. 92).

[G]ive citizens the tools they need to get involved. Offer the time, date, and place of meetings where the issue will be discussed. Provide contact information for the officials who will make the decision. Publish Web addresses where readers can learn more, contribute money, or join an advocacy group (Parks, 2006, p. 24).

The ‘practical use’ criterion has been chosen on grounds of its special significance as part, or potential part, of news reporting for societies with many social problems, such as developing and transitional countries including post-Communist ones. This criterion apparently has two parts in the way it can be exercised in news stories. The first part is straightforward as supplying practically useful information to people, including addresses of organisations that

could be useful or the time of some important events. The second part is more complicated and includes information related to solving important problems.

A regional newspaper is in a commanding position to expose wrongdoing, underlying failings or impending crises but, having highlighted a problem, it can also seek ways to become part of the solution (Hadwin, 2006, p. 144). This criterion is not extensively addressed in the available journalistic instructional literature, especially its second, more complicated part, as news reporting's contribution to solving problems. For example, in the textbook by Rich (2009) the only mention of this topic is given in connection to structuring broadcast news, which "starts with the statement of the problem, provides support in sound bites and facts, offers background, and discusses the solutions if any exist" (p. 243). Among the tips for finding the intro for a news story, she advises that if a story is focused on a problem the reader is likely to "discover the solution" (p. 156). Apparently not all news stories need solutions or even practical recommendations or advice. The ones that need these are usually news stories tackling socially important issues.

In the research by Kensicki (2004) the media were criticised for reporting news on socially important problems (poverty, pollution, incarceration) without suggestions of how they could be solved. Only three percent of the articles analysed in the research had some suggestions on the solution of the problems, and if the likelihood of solving of the problem was mentioned in the other 97 percent, it was mostly branded as nearly impossible to resolve. The author blames the media for creating the public apathy:

This factor [lack of solutions] would presumably encourage apathy in public that doesn't foresee the possibility of ever conquering these issues. What encouragement would a reader have to become involved if there is no possibility for reform? (Kensicki, 2004, p. 66).

Identifying the problem, explaining it, offering potential solutions and providing a forum in which the solutions could be discussed is called a "constructive method" by Parks (2006), who juxtaposed this method with two other possible frames of reporting public challenges, such as the "opportunity for officials to abuse their power", and "a polarizing conflict whose combatants will never find a common ground" (p. 32-33). Gibbs & Warhover (2002) agreed that the problem-solving frame is the best approach to covering public affairs news: "If a reporter writes not only about a problem but also about its possible solutions, for example, citizens are much more likely to see ways they can get involved in helping to solve the problem" (p. 164-165). However, Suckville (2008) warns that popular media yearn for simple solutions to complex problems while simplifying "the nature of the issues requiring informed debate" (p. 118). The latest statement was included as a separate descriptor in the 'inappropriate' level of the NTA because of its popularity: media tends to simplify complex

issues to make them comprehensible for the larger audience, but this is clearly not the way to deliver important complex issues.

The ‘outstanding’ descriptor was formulated on the basis of the statements that highly value the presence of solutions of important problems in news stories. Finding solutions requires much extra work and, therefore, it cannot be a mandatory element in news stories, but rather a ‘bonus’ element. Therefore, the ‘good’ level in this criterion does not include a statement on solutions.

The other descriptors were created using the guidelines in section 1.4.3.5. The descriptors in the ‘inappropriate’ and ‘acceptable’ levels of quality in which ‘minor’ and ‘major’ attributes are used will have to be additionally explained if chosen for training purposes because of the implicit message in these descriptors.

#### *3.4.4. Voices of people in the street*

This criterion was chosen not because it was widely recommended by journalism experts or well outlined in textbooks. The opposite is the case, it being mentioned rarely and the instructional material on it is scarce. Only rare statements could be found in available literature that mention the importance of putting people’s perceptions in news stories. For instance, Keeble (2005, p. 75), writes: “News is a record of the latest events, incidents and developments that in some way touch on the lives of ... readers.” Scanlan (2000, p. 9) also points out: “I believe the lifeblood of news is the ordinary people whose actions influence the news and whose lives are affected by it.” But neither of these statements are developed further in these authors’ books so that ‘voices of people’ could be used as a criterion for assessment and instruction.

People’s voices are used in western journalism not only to provide eyewitness reports (which, in this research, is an element the ‘credibility of sources’ criterion in the ‘Accuracy’ category), but also to put a human face on news (Dimitrova & Strömbäck, 2009). Those authors label the ability of “everyday people” to voice their opinions in media “a characteristic of a healthy democracy” (ibid, p. 87). But lay people’s voices commenting on the news are rarely used in news in western countries (Dearing, 1995). The experience of this researcher in news reporting and training shows that comments from ordinary people, who are not involved with the news, cannot be easily found in news stories written in transitional and developing countries unless people are victims or witnesses of some crime or an accident.

Using this criterion in the NTA for assessment and in the SET for instruction was believed to help journalists in transitional and developing countries to make, as Dimitrova & Strömbäck (2009) suggest, a step closer towards advancing democracy in their countries.

Not every news story may need comments by ordinary people, but many do. “If you are writing a reaction piece, for example, about a major public event, speak to a diverse selection of people on the street, as well as experts” (Bickler et al., 2004, p. 64). But the effects of political decisions on the lives of people should be in news stories (Harrower, 2007). It needs to be noted that because information from ordinary people who were directly affected by news is considered in the ‘impact’ criterion, and personal experience and anecdotes are used in the ‘human interest’ criterion, only comments of ordinary people with no direct involvement in news, but who can in some way identify themselves with news and give their opinions, will comprise the content of this criterion.

In digital times, collecting comments from ordinary people has become much easier by using various techniques of crowdsourcing. Citizens are effectively becoming journalists’ partners in news writing:

Consumers of news have more fresh reporting at their fingertips and the ability to participate in reportorial journalism more readily than ever before. They and reporters can share information, expertise, and perspectives, in direct contacts and through digital communities. Taking advantage of these opportunities requires finding ways to help new kinds of reporting grow and prosper while existing media adapt to new roles (Downie & Schudson, 2009).

But how many people’s opinions should be given in a news story? Like any other information in news, it depends on the story and the quality of comment. However, DeFleur & Dennis (2002) point at a “very different style” that has become “increasingly important”: precision journalism, or using research procedures of the social sciences to collect and present information for a news report. If traditional news reporters interview people to convey the opinions of ‘people in the street’ who are chosen at random, the “precision” journalists interview many people who represent a specific sampling so that the report contains a more valid summary of general views. This way of collecting people’s opinions should constitute a descriptor in the ‘outstanding’ level of quality because reporters need to put extra effort into getting such information, and because it is likely to contribute substantially to the meaningfulness of news stories.

As pointed out above, literature that could help to create the descriptors for this criterion is insufficient. Therefore, the guidelines in section 1.4.3.5 were used to formulate the descriptors for this criterion (see its full version in Table 26). Descriptors that include formulas ‘where necessary’, ‘where relevant’, ‘other major ways’, and ‘minor deficiency’ will have to be additionally explained if chosen for training purposes because of the implicitness of this message.

*Summary:*



Giving just facts is insufficient if the news is an important, but complex or controversial story. Such stories need to be provided with the meaning so that people have a chance to understand news and make important decisions for their lives.

Analysis of what may help news audiences to create meaning shows that this category can be described by the following criteria: ‘context’, ‘explanations’, ‘impact’ and ‘practical use’. An additional criterion — ‘voices of people in the street’ — was added at the choice of this researcher as an element of adding human appeal that is suggested to help the audience to identify with the news and create meaning.

Sixteen different types of contexts have been identified in this section as a result of analysis of literature (see Table 10, **Error! Reference source not found.**, and Appendix 16. These types are suggested to help inexperienced reporters to choose an appropriate context or contexts for a specific news story.

### 3.5. Style

Style is usually understood as a way in which something is performed, including the way something is written, as opposed to the content of the performance. A much-cited book on the style of writing, *The elements of style* (Strunk & White, 1959), contains the basic rules of usage of the English language, recommendations on the composition of writing units, rules of spelling and recommendations on how to write English-language prose in order to win the readers, including how to use dialogues.

Many authors of journalistic instructional texts refer to Strunk & White’s book when they teach news writing style which distinctively differs from the writing style used for academic papers, fiction books, technical manuals or texts of official speeches. However, style as an individual category based on the different aspects of the use of language in news writing has never made it to journalistic textbooks. As opposed to the shared understanding in teaching journalism of what constitutes categories described in other sections of this chapter, journalism textbooks rarely contain a specific chapter on the style of news writing. Most authors either discuss the elements of style in combination with other important issues, or create several chapters in which various elements of style are discussed. However, for the purpose of the creation of the assessment system, setting up a special category of the style of news writing is important.

It should be noted that the word ‘style’ can be used in the narrow and in the wider sense. In journalism this word is often used in the narrow — ‘journalistic’ — sense which “has to do with consistency of usage, spelling and other matters throughout a publication, independent of writers” (Russial, 2004). This has to do with the usage of style books, of which the most

popular is the Associated Press stylebook (Goldstein & Associated Press., 2002). But the commonsense understanding of style is the way in which something is performed. In this section the issues of style in news journalism will be analysed in the wider sense, which will include style book issues. To come up with the elements of style in journalism news writing, textbooks on journalism teaching and popular books on news writing and editing were analysed to find out the criteria which would sufficiently represent the style of news writing as a category (Appendix 6, Table 28).

It can be seen from Table 28 that in some journalism books several chapters are written about the issues dealing with the style of news writing, while some compress such issues. However, it is easy to see that many of the topics in these chapters or sections of chapters that are presented in the table are similar. The most popular issues are the ways language is used (it must be, among other things, clear, concise, simple, precise), the use of quotes (they must be interesting and contain important messages), the ways of creating images by means of using details and descriptions. Grammar and spelling are a section in nearly all the textbooks. Some authors include the rules of attribution in the sections in which they teach presenting quotes. Such inclusion is on the one hand logical, because quotes must be attributed, but on the other hand, reported speech must be attributed as well, and, the most important function of attribution is to enhance the credibility of news stories. Therefore as a news writing criterion attribution belongs rather to the ‘Factual quality and credibility’ category, than to the ‘Style’.

One interesting idea which apparently belongs to the wider understanding of style as a category has been developed by Hart (2006), who suggested that “unique angles of approach to subjects” (p. 195) could be considered an element of the reporter’s individual voice<sup>68</sup> and not only own distinctive vocabulary or syntax. This is an important issue to be both assessed and trained for inexperienced reporters or reporters from post-authoritarian countries, whose individual voice is usually weak or even absent to suggest their own angles to stories or apply strong thematic frames to override what is offered to them by influential sources or suggested as pre-fabricated news in press-releases or other types of official handouts. Therefore, it is expedient to include this element in the ‘Style’ category as an individual criterion.

### *Summary*

---

<sup>68</sup> Hart equated the journalists who are able to step out on their own with breaking out from the chorus and becoming a unique professional to famous singers: “There’s only one Billie Holiday, or Frank Sinatra, or Ella Fitzgerald” he wrote (p. 194).

The criteria for the inclusion in the ‘Style’ category on grounds of the analysis of journalistic literature are: ‘reporter’s voice’, ‘use of language’, ‘use of details’, ‘use of quotes’, and ‘grammar.’

### *3.5.1. Reporter’s voice*

This criterion concerns what “stands near the very centre of the press’s social purpose in a self-governing society” (Fuller, 1996, p. 5) — the issue of how to treat official statements. Officials are frequent sources in news reports because of the weight of authority coming with their title (Manning, 2001; Rupar, 2006; Sessions, 2003). However, often their statements or press releases are simply processed under reporters’ bylines without them adding their own work. Tully (2008) called it “lazy and unethical” journalism (p. 26), and Lee & Solomon (1990) labelled it ‘stenography’ journalism. Such lack of independent reporting is in breach of the guiding principles of good journalism formulated by Steele (2000), one of which says journalists should “seek out and disseminate competing perspectives without being unduly influenced by those who would use their power or position counter to the public interest.”

One problem with official statements is that they may or may not be true (Rich, 2009). They even “may be designed to hide some” information (Bickler et al., 2004, p. 68):

This would especially be the case, for example, if asking a defence minister about the detailed progress of an on-going military campaign where he is a partisan and therefore may be specifically unreliable. Despite, or indeed because of, his authoritative position, he may not tell the truth or may be adding pro-government “spin” in attempt to portray events in a favourable light (Bickler et al., 2004, p. 68).

‘Stenography’ journalism is especially relevant to news journalism in post-authoritarian and developing countries. While those journalism trainers who bid for new contracts in developing countries omit mentioning problems or opposition that similar contracts caused in other countries (Schiffrin, 2006), journalists, who lack the relevant knowledge often uncritically use press releases, repeating them word-for-word:

The problem is that those who devote resources to public relations usually have a motive for doing so. They typically want to convince others to support the positions that they advocate. But too often reporters take press releases as ‘facts’ rather than as ‘advocacy’ (Schiffrin, 2006, p. 186).

But over-reliance on official statements — whether in press releases or in officials’ utterances — is a big issue anywhere. “A lot of journalists apparently feel that government officials are there to dish out the facts, and reporters merely have to come and get them (Lee & Solomon, 1990, p. 45). Sometimes lazy journalism goes to ridiculous extents, replacing any journalistic initiative or search for new angles. For instance, in her investigation of the coverage of the ‘Corngate’ scandal in New Zealand (see more about this scandal in section 3.2.1.3), Sessions (2003) found that journalists relied on official statements to the extent that scientists’

comments were used only when they came forward with their own press releases or volunteered to speak at a news briefing.

Therefore the information coming from authorities needs to be checked or a contrary view should be sought in the interests of being fair and reliable (Bickler et al., 2004). Rich (2009) and Ward (2002) also advise to not treat news releases as a balanced news story and show initiative by verifying and challenging information, that may even alter the focus of the story:

Even though you may copy information in the release without plagiarizing, you should always check the information. You should also try to contact sources listed in the release and seek other sources to confirm, deny or give other points of view (Rich, 2009, p. 81).

Often the valid countering opinion that can change the angle of news is “just around the corner in the scientific community” (Schwitzer, 1992, p. 19).

### 3.5.2. *Use of details*

Descriptions of what journalists saw, felt, heard, tasted or smelled make stories more interesting (Brooks et al., 1988; Fedler, Bender, Davenport, & Drager, 2005) by creating the effect of presence. Even if only a few words or phrases, it is worthwhile to use descriptions to “add extra information and help readers to imagine better what has happened, to whom and where ... words can convey things that pictures cannot” (Randall, 2000, p. 182). Especially when writing from a specific location, the journalist should make clear to the readers that he or she was on the spot by referring to such details (Bickler et al., 2004): “[B]ring the reader there by presenting some notable details and human colour from your own eyewitness observations.” (ibid, p. 64). Describing his powerful storytelling in *War and Peace*, the great Russian writer, Leo Tolstoy, said: “I don’t tell; I don’t explain. I show; I let my characters talk for me” (Mencher, 1994, p. 135). Mencher gives an example when only a few words carry a world of emotions:

Covering the funeral of a child killed by a sniper, a reporter wrote, “The grief-stricken parents wept during the service.” Another reporter wrote, “The parents wept quietly. Mrs Franklin leaned against her husband for support.” The first reporter *tells* us the parents are “grief-stricken,” The other reporter *shows* us the woman’s grief (ibid, p. 134, bold in original).

Colour can be injected even into a breaking news story. Rich (2009) gives such an example from a breaking news story about the murder of a man by his girlfriend. The paragraph describes how the gravely wounded man made his way out. The journalist apparently went there and made some research that allowed her to show, not just tell:

Brown, who was shot several times, staggered out of the apartment and down two houses to the Waystation convenience store on Virginia Street — his path, easily traceable by 42 nickel-size blood splotches that dotted the sidewalk (p. 71).

“Telling only makes for dull reading”, writes Mencher (1994). “Showing engages readers by making them visualize, draw conclusions, experience insights.” But telling details are rarely found in news texts written by inexperienced journalists. Fedler et al., (2005) referred to an example of an absence of much needed description: “The speaker, John Mollwitz, showed some examples of electronic newspapers and talked about how they fit into the newspaper industry” (ibid, p. 218). The authors criticised the reporter for not describing what the newspaper looked like, which was essential for the readers to understand the news.

Randall (1996) writes that small details are sometimes the most telling, and that they can make a news story make sense. “Develop your ability to concentrate on details,” he writes (p. 214). An example of the use of a small detail — that a television set did not work — was used to focus the story about a burglar, who was spotted by a neighbour carrying out the television set the neighbour knew was broken (Brooks et al., 1988, p. 95). Descriptions can also go wrong. Randall (1996) advises reporters that if they are used to make sure they are correct. He mentioned a journalist, who, in an effort to show the sufferings of ordinary people after an earthquake in Central America, described how hungry families ate rats. Only when the story came out did he understand that they had been eating guinea pigs, which in that area was a treat. Brooks et al. (1988) point out that the details should also be relevant and enhance the story rather than litter it with words: “Some details are out of place as white tennis shoes with black business suit” (p. 91). Some details while appropriate for a humorous story — for instance the description of Johnny Cash moving “with the grace of a little boy who has to go to the bathroom” — may be distracting in other type of stories (ibid). The details should be also appropriate. For instance, if a pregnant woman fainted during testifying, her pregnancy is an appropriate detail. If she was just testifying, it is not (ibid). “The good writer must know when detail is appropriate” (Brooks et al., 1988, p. 92). Irrelevance of descriptors has been used to create the descriptors for the ‘inappropriate’ level of quality in this criterion.

The most difficult issue when using descriptions is to distinguish between information and opinion. “Isn’t it sometimes appropriate to add emotion and attitude to news writing? Doesn’t complete objectivity suck the life out of stories? Where do you draw the line?” Harrower (2007) poses the questions which are endlessly debated by journalists and concludes: “[T]he answers aren’t always simple.” He places newspaper stories on a continuum from “rigidly objective” news to opinionated stories, like opinion columns and movie reviews with sport stories in the middle (p. 35). The second from the top after breaking news with “straightforward, factual and unemotional” news stories is a political news story, in which “it is OK to use colorful descriptions if they’re accurate”, but reporters should be “careful not to inject their own political views” (ibid).

Other important issues to consider are the length and the location of descriptions (Randall, 2000): “colour is best doled out in small helpings here and there rather than in long, unbroken passages” (p. 182). The placement of descriptions, provided in instalments, depends on their significance and relevance to the focus: if a journalist quotes a politician calling on the government to resign, the fact that he has red hair and collect stamps can be mentioned in the text, but not in the intro or the top of the story (ibid).

As in many other criteria, the hardest was to come up with the descriptors in the ‘outstanding’ level of quality. It was decided that the human emotions that are hardest to describe create a sense of drama or other strong feelings. Therefore, the descriptor was formulated as follows: ‘details appeal to the senses of the reader, helping to understand people’s strong feelings or problems’.

### 3.5.3. *Use of language*

News writing style which includes brevity, clarity, directness and simplicity is rather common across journalistic cultures. The rules to be clear, direct, concise and conversational in delivering news can be seen in textbooks issued in such different regions in the world as the United States (Clark, 2006; Lorenz & Vivian, 1996; Scanlan, 2000), Britain (Evans, 1972; Keeble, 1994), Africa (Udofia, 1987), the Pacific region (Robie, 2001), or in Russia (Randall, 1996). One of the most important elements of news writing, which is also among the most difficult to implement for inexperienced reporters and for reporters in post-authoritarian countries, is the need to write in a conversational style, in other words, the need to write for people. Parks (2006) expressed it well:

Writing like a diplomat will attract an audience of diplomats. Writing like a bureaucrat will attract an audience of bureaucrats. Writing like a politician will attract an audience of politicians. Writing like a *person* will attract an audience of people — including diplomats, bureaucrats, and politicians, but also including bus drivers, school teachers, airplane mechanics, doctors, machinists, accountants and restaurateurs... People may or may not like your take on any given story, but they will be more likely to understand it, more likely to form their own judgment – and more likely to come back for more the next day (p. 95, italics in original).

Other undisputable requirements of the use of language in news stories will be analysed in Table 12. But first, one controversial point needs to be discussed that is not sufficiently described in academic literature or textbooks and which posed a problem to formulate relevant descriptors in the NTA. It is whether and how expletives and other offensive language could be used in news stories and if they can be used, what should the mechanics be? BBC guidelines give a clear vision of the scope of the problem saying that offensive language “is one of the most frequent causes of complaint” (*Editorial guidelines in full. Harm and offence*, n.d.). The guidelines further explain the complexity:

Judgements about its use are difficult because they depend on tone and context. There is no consensus about words that are acceptable, when, and by whom. Different words cause different degrees of offence in different parts of the world. So a person's age, sex, education, employment, belief, nationality, and where they live, all impact on whether or not they might be offended (ibid).

The BBC lists the following words that cause most offence to the audience:

- sexual swearwords
- terms of racist abuse
- terms of sexual and sexist abuse or abuse referring to sexuality
- pejorative terms relating to illness or disabilities
- casual or derogatory use of holy names or religious words and especially in combination with other offensive language (ibid).

The most offensive language is mentioned in the BBC guidelines as c-, m- and f-words – which, together with more mild b-, n-, s- and other similar words<sup>69</sup> became widespread in TV entertainment programmes (Sapolsky & Kaye, 2005). “[I]ntrusive, offensive, quasi-pornographic, arrogant, inaccurate, salacious and unprincipled” language has been also adopted in movies<sup>70</sup> and by tabloid journalism (Bromley & Stephenson, 1998, p. 1).

Textbooks outright forbid the use of such words in or out of quotes, media organisations ban the use of these words in children programmes or publications. But offensive language has become so common that some media organisations consider using it when its source is a prominent official.

At least two high-profile instances have been mentioned in the past decade including publication of the full version of the f-word by the *Washington Post* (Kurtz, 2006), when Dick Cheney yelled in the Parliament at Senator Pat Leahy to “go f\* himself” in 2004 (Weiner, 2010). Another instance was using the full version of the s-word when then US President George W. Bush, not knowing that the microphones were still on, famously told then British Prime Minister Tony Blair: “See the irony is that what they need to do is get Syria to get Hezbollah to stop doing this shit and it's over” (*'Shit' happens, as most news outlets report Bush profanity*, 2006). Not only the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* published the s-word in full, but so did the *Los Angeles Times*, CBS News, MSNBC, CNN, the BBC, *Financial Times*, *Forbes*, McClatchy's Washington bureau, Bloomberg and the Salt Lake (Utah) *Tribune* (ibid). Reuters also spelled the full version (*Unplugged Bush speaks frankly*, 2006). CNN's spokeswoman Christa Robinson was quoted as saying that as a norm, CNN would not broadcast this word, but it was deemed appropriate when said by the president in

---

<sup>69</sup> For a comprehensive review of offensive language in media see (Bolton, 2006).

<sup>70</sup> A record of the use of the f-word belongs to the *Casino* film by Martin Scorsese, where it appeared 442 times, on average 2.4 times a minute (Clark, 2010).

the particular context: “The expletive ... was reflective of how these two world leaders talk with each other” (Johnson, 2006). Poynter’s scholar on ethics issues, Bob Steele, called such use “justifiable” (Steele, 2006):

The president was discussing an important, international issue. He made a specific comment about a significant element of this issue, the roles of the United Nations and Syria. He made the comment in public. He said this to another world leader ...  
Altering Bush’s quote is much more problematic. Using dashes for some letters of the word gets in the way of the specificity of the quote. Blurring the word detracts from the accuracy of what the president said. Changing the reality marginalizes the precision and the power of his statement (cited in *ibid*).

The Associated Press, however, was cautious distributing this news around the globe. For stories that would be further edited by media organisations, the AP included the Bush quote with the obscene word unchanged, but flagged it because the word needed to be translated. In the stories that the AP posted directly on more than 400 newspaper websites, the word was printed with hyphens replacing some letters (*'Shit' happens, as most news outlets report Bush profanity*, 2006). AP’s Executive Editor Kathleen Carroll was quoted as saying that the agency tried to “give people the discretion to do what they need to do”. The AP stylebook says that profanities should not be used, but it gives flexibility on direct quotes.

In summary, the use of obscenities seems to be at the discretion of news organisations and many decided to publish it in full because it was considered newsworthy. While the general rule is not to use such words, the fact that two prominent world leaders had been chatting about one of the most important international issues and the direct quote was available publicly dictated the exception from the rule. Obviously, this exception does not need to become part of the ‘good’ level of performance, but it could be used in the ‘unacceptable’ level of the NTA as ‘expletives are used outside quotes from top national leaders’.

But many novice journalists do not write about national or international politics. They need to deal with the words of lower-profile leaders. So how prominent could the officials be that their dirty language should be considered for a local publication? Such suggestions have not been found in available literature, but the theory is out there: when potentially offensive material is considered for the publication, the clear editorial purpose should be demonstrated (*Online services guidelines in full. Harm and offence*). Therefore, the addition of the formula ‘local leaders if deemed newsworthy by the editorial decision’ is expedient. Such a formula does not strictly regulate the level of the profile of the official, but gives more responsibility to the media organisation. Certainly an online marker will not be able to check whether such an editorial decision was achieved before publication, but it could be made clear out of the discussion that usually follows after the feedback on a story is posted during online training.



An additional point in coming up with the final version of this descriptor is to upgrade the notion of ‘expletives’ to the notion of ‘offensive language including expletives’ which will increase the generalisability of the descriptor. Therefore, the descriptor suggested in the previous paragraph may be formulated: ‘offensive language including expletives is used outside quotes from top national leaders or local leaders if deemed newsworthy by editorial decision.’

**Table 12. Uncontroversial elements and descriptors for the criterion ‘use of language’**

<i>Elements of the criterion</i>	<i>Quality statements made in literature, author</i>	<i>Elements of the descriptors in different levels of the NTA, explanations where needed</i>
Clarity	<p>Nothing that can’t be absorbed at first reading ought to appear in a newspaper (Sellers, 1985).</p> <p>The word ‘reform’ may mean just about anything. Some such reforms mean that the wealthy are getting major tax cuts (Lee &amp; Solomon, 1990)</p> <p>Prefer the specific word to the abstract (Winkler &amp; Wilson, 1998)</p> <p>Unacceptable is arcane language, jargon, lingo (Lorenz &amp; Vivian, 1996; Rich, 2009), tabloidese (Tucker, 2008), slang (Tucker, 2008), cliché (Tucker, 2008), bad language (Tucker, 2008), officialese (official gobbledegook. It is a “cardinal sin”: journalists repeat the jargon because they don’t understand its meaning p. 107) (Ward, 2002)</p> <p>Jargon is the verbal and written shorthand of the workplace. It can be useful in that context, but jargon has the reverse effect when used in external communication. It excludes readers, who may also be clients and customers (Ward, 2002)</p> <p>Language should communicate a clear idea (Ward, 2002)</p> <p>Avoid specialist diction, long and elaborate sentences and paragraphs, and stylistic mannerisms of the kind found in legal contracts, legislation, technical reports, literary tracts and scientific and academic papers (Tucker, 2008)</p> <p>“Reading journalese [clichés, stilted or technical words and phrases that officials use but readers do not] is like having a</p>	<p><b>‘unacceptable’</b>: ‘cynicism, irony, cliché, ambiguity, slang, official or technical jargon, lingo, tabloidese, bad taste or vulgar language is used</p> <p><b>‘inappropriate’</b>: ‘language is confusing, uncertain, abstract, general</p> <p><b>‘acceptable’</b> one or two sentences are too long (meaning that this is an exception and thus may be considered a minor deficiency)</p> <p><b>‘good’</b>: language is clear</p>

	<p>series of small strokes” (Jack Cappon, writing coach for The Associated Press cited in Rich, 2009, p. 398)</p> <p>Generalities are used rather than specifics (Ward, 2002)</p> <p>Words with abstract, rather than concrete, meaning are used (Ward, 2002)</p>	
Creativity	<p>Vary the pace by using both long and short paragraphs and sentences (Rich, 2009)</p> <p>Text contains a mix of sentences of different length (Ward, 2002)</p> <p>Juxtaposition of two apparent opposites create arresting and thought provoking effect (Ward, 2002)</p>	<p><b>‘outstanding’</b>: pacing, power of contrasts and juxtapositions are used</p>
Simplicity	<p>Prefer the familiar word to the fancy (Winkler &amp; Wilson, 1998)</p> <p>Words with complex meanings are used when simpler alternatives are available (Ward, 2002)</p> <p>Simple sentences should be used (Tucker, 2008)</p> <p>“Unless you start writing the way your neighbors talk, you're not going to go anywhere” (Jack Cappon, writing coach for The Associated Press cited in Rich, 2009, p. 398)</p> <p>News language should be “intriguing enough and simple enough to appeal to our average reader, who might be a retailer in Des Moines, a gas station owner in Dallas, a grain merchant in Oklahoma City or someone else with no familiarity on the subject” (Memo of the Wall Street Journal cited in Rich, 2009, p. 369)</p> <p>The more complex the concept, the simpler your sentences should be (Rich, 2009)</p> <p>Numbers can enhance the clarity, but if overused, they introduce clutter and confusion. Round numbers to help people understand what they indicate: 'almost 20 percent' is better than 19.9145 percent. The significance of numbers is clearer if one is used as a base number and another as a percentage of change, or the percentage of change is used with the period of time (Lorenz &amp; Vivian, 1996)</p>	<p><b>‘inappropriate’</b>: language is confusing, complex; or more than two numbers are used in one sentence</p> <p><b>‘good’</b>: language is simple and conversational; numbers show change where possible</p>

	Avoid bunching numbers in one paragraph, spread them out over a few paragraphs, or present them as bullet points (Rich, 2009)	
Directness	<p>You should always try to write directly (Ward, 2002, Krug, 2006)</p> <p>Sentences should be to the point (Ward, 2002)</p> <p>Starting with subordinate clause without justification (Ward, 2002)</p> <p>Euphemisms are enemies of direct expression, erode the detached, neutral tone that people expect. Use ‘died’, not ‘passed away’ or ‘was called by the grim reaper’ (Lorenz &amp; Vivian, 1996)</p> <p>Euphemisms can convey a skewed impression, for example U.S. press wrote that Chilean President Salvador Allende ‘died’ in his palace while he was murdered by the military. This obscured the fact that the U.S. government was backing the 1973 coup. Sometimes the word ‘modernisation’ is used in connection to upgrading nuclear arsenals, or the word ‘instability’ is used only for the overseas situations disapproved by the U.S. State Department (Lee &amp; Solomon, 1990)</p>	<p><b>‘inappropriate’</b>: euphemisms are used (the use of euphemisms has been allocated in the ‘inappropriate’ level because it belongs to the uncertainty or indirectness rather than to offensive or incomprehensible language as in the ‘unacceptable’ level)</p> <p><b>‘good’</b>: language is direct and to the point</p>
Brevity	<p>Vigorous writing is concise (Strunk &amp; White, 1959)</p> <p>Nothing is so tiring for the reader as excavating nuggets of meaning from mountains of words (Evans, 1972)</p> <p>Prefer the short word to the long, use no more words than necessary to make your meaning clear (Winkler &amp; Wilson, 1998).</p> <p>“Pumped up presentation” with “adjectives abound” can ruin a good story (Ward, 2002, p. 37)</p> <p>Long words are used when shorter alternatives are available (Ward, 2002)</p> <p>Instead of ‘commence’ say ‘begin’, instead of ‘endeavour’, say ‘try’, instead of ‘announced’, say ‘said’ (Winkler &amp; Wilson, 1998)</p> <p>More words than it is needed are used (Waterhouse &amp; Waterhouse, 1993)</p> <p>Tautologies are used (Ward, 2002) (general consensus, mutual agreement,</p>	<p><b>‘inappropriate’</b>: language is too wordy; or tautologies or repetitions, or needless adjectives are used</p> <p><b>‘acceptable’</b> one sentence contains two separate thoughts (meaning that this is an exception and thus may be considered a minor deficiency); or long words are used when short ones are available</p> <p><b>‘good’</b>: language is concise, one idea is used per paragraph</p>

	<p>strange phenomena, continue to remain)</p> <p>“You don’t have to say something twice to get the message across” (Ward, 2002, p. 107)</p> <p>If you have to pause for breath while reading a sentence out loud, it is too long (Winkler &amp; Wilson, 1998)</p> <p>Sentences should be short (Tucker, 2008, Ward, 2002)</p> <p>The shorter the sentence, the more readable they are and the less prone to error (Winkler &amp; Wilson, 1998)</p> <p>Sentences should contain one basic thought or piece of information (Ward, 2002)</p> <p>Write one idea per paragraph, “parcel information in short, paragraph-sized chunks” (Harrower, 2007)</p> <p>If all sentences are short and snappy an unpleasant staccato will be produced, a machinegun effect that will wear out the reader (Ward, 2002)</p> <p>Too long sentences are “death to readability” and “have to be read twice to get their full meaning” (Sellers, 1985).</p>	
Strength, voice	<p>Passive voice is used unjustifiably (Ward, 2002)</p> <p>Think S-V-O (subject, verb, object) when you write to make writing active, straightforward and direct (Lorenz &amp; Vivian, 1996).</p> <p>However, if active construction delays news, the passive construction may be better. Example: “A 40 percent rate hike for Pacific Bell customers was approved by the commission” is better than “The commission approved a 40 percent rate hike for Pacific Bell customers” (Lorenz &amp; Vivian, 1996).</p> <p>The passive voice, for example ‘was recently down at 4.52’, ‘was lower at’, ‘was higher’ is a weak voice, mostly because it relies on a modifier to convey action. Active voice, ‘fell 10 percent to 4.52’, rose to a record, declined, advanced, gained’, is strong because the verb does the work and not the ‘crutch’, the modifier. Modifiers are weeds. Nouns and verbs are the flowers (Winkler &amp; Wilson,</p>	<p><b>‘unacceptable’</b>: passive voice is used where active voice is appropriate; language is too weak</p> <p><b>‘good’</b>: strong verbs are used; active voice is used wherever possible; or use of passive voice is justified</p>

	1998).  Whenever possible replace bland verbs including 'to be' with stronger verbs that paint a picture of the activity (Rich, 2009), for example «A 42-year-old St. Joseph man <i>escaped</i> a blazing house without serious injuries when he <i>grabbed</i> a coffee table, <i>hurled</i> it through a picture window, and then like a movie stuntman, <i>leaped</i> through the jagged glass to escape the heat and flames» (ibid, p. 399, emphasis in original).	
--	--	--

As with some other criteria, information in literature to articulate the descriptors for the ‘outstanding’ level of quality was limited. Therefore, guidelines in section 1.4.3.5 were used, and an additional descriptor was formulated the following way: ‘story is written with flair, energy and creativity’. The descriptor is appended by clarifications from Table 12 — ‘using power of contrasts, juxtapositions and pacing’ — presuming that more elements may also be labelled as ‘outstanding’. Additional elements may either be added to the NTA as it develops, or added to the SET only if such additions will make the NTA too large.

An additional descriptor was added to the ‘inappropriate’ level of the NTA in regard to using abbreviations without explanations when they are not common knowledge. This mistake is rather typical of inexperienced journalists.

### 3.5.4. *Use of quotes*

In this section only the use of direct quotes is analysed as the use of paraphrased speech is subject to the ‘use of language’ criteria. Stories without direct quotations are dull and dry, most journalistic authors agree. Bright and arresting comments don’t only add spice to news, they also:

- can succinctly reinforce a point already made in indirect speech (Tucker, 2008)
- add credibility to the story (McGlone, 2005)
- give a story personality, authenticity, humour (Harrower, 2007)
- interest, information and memorableness, substantiate information in the story, let the reader hear the speaker (Rich, 2009)
- add “emotion, feeling, drama or information that is pivotal to the story development” (Ward, 2002, p. 108)
- add emphasis to the story, or help the flow (Fedler et al., 2005)
- “reveal character, advance the narrative, or drive home a controversial point” or add authority (Scanlan, 2000, p. 222)
- may be “the only prudent way to assign personal responsibility for the opinion without being accused of libel” (McGlone, 2005, p. 511).

Bad quotes also have their specific features. They:

- contain facts instead of ideas or opinions of a speaker (Harrower, 2007; Rich, 2009)
- are not related to the focus or supporting points in the story (Rich, 2009)
- are dull, obvious (Harrower, 2007)
- are boring and can bog down stories (Rich, 2009)
- contain mundane (Ward, 2002) or indisputable information (Rich, 2009)
- quote what has been already said (Fedler et al., 2005; Harrower, 2007; Scanlan, 2000). Readers do not need a paraphrase and a quote saying the same (Scanlan, 2000)
- should be paraphrased, if they are unclear (Rich, 2009).

These statements (though it was impossible to use all of them) allowed formulation of several descriptors for the NTA:

**‘outstanding’**: quotes are off-beat; or add drama to the story

**‘good’**: quotes are interesting, relevant; deliver emotion or judgment

**‘inappropriate’**: quotes contain banal statements; or facts rather than comment or judgment; or are boring; or quote should have been paraphrased in a clear and concise way.

Other uncontroversial descriptions of various elements of the use of quotes are presented in Table 13.

**Table 13. Elements and descriptors for the criterion ‘use of quotes’ of the NTA1**

<i>Elements of the criterion</i>	<i>Quality statements made in literature, author</i>	<i>Elements of the descriptors in different levels of the NTA, explanations where needed</i>
Relevance	Avoid quotes that are not related to the focus or supporting points in the story (Rich, 2009)	<b>‘good’</b> : Quotes are relevant
Number of quotes	Usually, the proportion of indirect paraphrased paragraphs to direct quotes is three to one (Tucker, 2008)  Many reporters use quotes like a crutch forgetting that it is not the sources, but themselves, who are writing a story (Scanlan, 2000)	<b>‘inappropriate’</b> : more than a quarter of the story consists of quotes
Quoting controversies	If a quote is apparently wrong or odd, another source should be approached to contradict it (Harrower, 2007)	<b>‘unacceptable’</b> : quotes are misleading, odd, unbalanced
Length of quotes	Quotes should not be monologues. One or two sentences is enough, rarely one or two paragraphs (Harrower, 2007).  Do not use every quote in your notebook to prove you did the interviews: This is dictation and not journalistic writing (Scanlan, 2000)	<b>‘unacceptable’</b> : quotes are too wordy for their worth; or too long

	Long quotes usually are not very interesting, writing coach for the Detroit Free Press Susan Ager, quoted by Rich (2009)	
Use of partial quotes	Using fragmentary quotes may make them look odd, often imparting a meaning not intended by the author or the speaker (Harrower, 2007). Use them only if the whole quote is cumbersome (Rich, 2009)	<b>‘unacceptable’</b> : a message in a partial quote may be understood differently from its direct meaning

While there is no controversy regarding the need for quotes and their function in news stories, there are disagreements regarding whether quotations can be altered or if they must be the exact replication of the words of the source (Fakazis, 2006; McGlone, 2005; Tucker, 2008), especially if speakers “stumble, stammer, circle around the subject” or do not speak in complete sentences (Scanlan, 2000, p. 220). If “incoherence is part of the story” journalists should “quote them, accurately, with every unfinished sentence, every ungrammatical statement, and every misuse of words faithfully preserved” (Randall, 2000, p. 187). But in most cases journalists do not aim to shame their source. So how can the problem with incoherence, missing words, and unfinished thoughts — which is typical for much of direct speech — be resolved? Michael Pollan, executive editor of the *Harper’s Magazine*, was quoted by Carmody (1991) as saying that “if everyone started publishing verbatim quotes, you would get the impression that the government was full of fools” (p. 12).

Lehrer (1989) points out that it is not so rare that quotes in news stories are not word-for-word utterances of the source, though this does not necessarily mean that the meaning is distorted. McGlone (2005) classified the levels of ‘badness’ in doctoring quotations:

- The least objectionable modifications: authors correct grammar, replace unheralded pronouns with proper names, remove expletives
- Slightly more problematic: substitution of synonyms for words the author deems too obscure, which have the potential for semantic drift from the original statement
- Extreme cases: authors attribute entirely fabricated quotes to sources that misrepresent their attitudes or beliefs.

As the result of an oft-cited case in which a *New Yorker Magazine* reporter Janet Malcolm was sued for libel for allegedly fabricating direct quotations and in several cases compressing into one quote what had been said on different occasions (Fakazis, 2006), the US Supreme Court in 1994 established the standard for quotations:

In general, quotation marks around a passage indicate to the reader that the passage reproduces the speaker’s words verbatim. They inform the reader that he or she is reading the statement of the speaker, not a paraphrase or other indirect interpretation by an author (the standard as quoted in Scanlan, 2000, p. 221).

But before this standard was established, the court listened to various journalism experts and the plaintiff side for nine years trying to establish the routines of news organisations in

dealing with people's statements. Fakazis (2006) wrote that the biggest problem that the judges had to deal with is absence of written rituals of dealing with direct speech in journalistic manuals, and Malcolm's only authority "came from experience and from what she and other writers like her simply 'knew' about the daily practice of journalism" (p. 19). These implicit but shared practices were revealed to the court that heard that journalists and editors as a matter of routine edit grammar, delete expletives, abridge and condense the wording, use memory to construct quotes, reorganise quotes for sense, untangle ambiguities (Fakazis, 2006). A *New York Times* journalist reflecting on Malcolm's case wrote that the rules governing good journalism are not always clear-cut (Carmody, 1991). She asked rhetorically if rambling sentences should be tightened, or euphemisms substituted for obscenities as a matter of taste<sup>71</sup>, or dialect be written as spoken or converted to standard English. In conclusion, she quoted editor of *Newsweek* Maynard Parker as saying that what matters is fairness and not "what is between the quotes" (p. 12). But to what extent does fairness go in the example of an altered quote given by Mencher (1994) from the coverage of rape in which editor of the newspaper warned the reporter that the word 'rape' was taboo:

In his second paragraph, he [reporter] wrote, "The woman ran down the street screaming, 'Help, I've been criminally assaulted! Help, I've been criminally assaulted!'" (ibid, p. 141).

More than 10 years after the process was completed, Fakazis (2006) wrote that "the case still resonates in the journalism community, and still triggers debate" (p. 19). One example of such debate was a piece in the textbook by Scanlan (2000), six years after the standard of what is a quote was published. Scanlan brought up the same polarised issue: he pointed out that on the one hand "changing a quote should be a firing offense" (p. 220), but on the other hand he brings in an opinion of Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter James B. Stewart, formerly with the *Washington Post*, who wrote in his book *Follow the Story* (Stewart, 1998): "publications use different standards, but all that I have worked for edit quotations for grammar and usage and simply to make sense of what was said ... The important thing is that the substance of what was said be conveyed accurately" (p. 220-221). In his conclusion on the dispute, Scanlan suggests that journalists stick to the standard of quoting outlined in Malcolm's case. Randall (2000) agrees:

These [quotation marks] indicate that what is inside them is a verbatim record of what was said. Not an edited version of their words, or a tidied up or summarised account. Nor what someone meant to say, or would have said if they had only been sufficiently well educated to speak in such grammatical sentences. But a word for word, syllable by syllable, accurate report of their actual words (p. 187).

---

<sup>71</sup> See discussion of the use of obscenities in the 'use of language' criterion in section 3.5.3



This standard is used by the most respectable news organisations. For instance, the Reuters handbook of journalism says firmly that quotes are “sacrosanct”, and it is not the reporters’ job to either “make people look good by cleaning up inelegant turns of phrase” or “to expose them to ridicule by running such quotes” (*Reuters handbook of journalism*, 2008, p. 4). Paraphrase and reported speech should be used instead (ibid). Allan Siegal, assistant managing editor at the *New York Times* was also quoted as saying in Carmody (1991) that if quotes are used, they should be an “absolutely literal rendition of what the quoted person said” (p. 12). In practice the only changes to quotes which are authorised by most news organisations are insertions in the quotes with the missing first names, title, or short clarifications that help the quote to be understood. They are inserted as a rule in square brackets to make it clear that they are not part of the quotation as verbatim reproduction of someone’s words. Such insertions are usually regulated by the house style of news organisations.

But how easy is it for a coder or an instructor to check if a quote has been altered? In the experience of this researcher in online training, such checking was possible when the quotes by high-profile sources were used that were reported by other sources and other publications: these could be googled to test against the story submitted for assessment and instructional purposes. Several times doubt that the source actually said what was quoted appeared because the quote contained either nonsense, or a mistake that a professional or official most probably did not make. In cases where quotes contain nonsense, another descriptor applies in the same, ‘unacceptable’ level of quality — ‘quotes make no sense’. This descriptor was added on the base of the previous experience of this researcher in training news reporters.

### 3.5.5. *Grammar and spelling*

A good level of copy-editing is achieved when the story carries on without obstructions, which may not only be problems with logical flow, but mistakes in spelling, grammar, inconsistencies of style (Russial, 2004). The author calls it the “bedrock of copy editing” (ibid, p. 11) adding that “‘simple’ mistakes — typos, spelling errors, grammar errors, usage errors, style errors — make a publication look unprofessional, “distracting attention of the reader from making sense of what they read. Such mistakes undermine the publication’s credibility” (Russial, 2004, p. 11).

The rules of style in individual media organisations are usually outlined in style books, which regulate the use of language including quotes, abbreviations, grammar and spelling. Countless publications have been written on the subject of grammar, spelling, punctuation and style. It is impossible to list all the possible mistakes in the use of these elements of news style because of space constraints of a thesis, and because it will anyway be impossible to list even

the major violations in the format of the NTA. Therefore, advocating the best style, even pointing at the much used Associated Press style as the standard which will be used in the NTA, is outside the scope of this research<sup>72</sup> because the NTA is being created as a generic tool that could be further adapted for specific media organisations. Therefore, the usage of words and spellings (except lingo and jargon) which are considered standard within the language, will be judged in the NTA at the ‘good’ level. Being more precise introducing the specific rules is impossible because of the unwieldy length the NTA may assume.

The second reason for not detailing this criterion to the extent done with the other criteria processed for the NTA is that this researcher is not a native speaker and prepared the NTA-based SET (or virtual book) to be tested in an experiment conducted in the Russian language. Therefore, this section will not concentrate on the style elements that are peculiar to the English language and are underpinned by what is known as Standard English (Aitchison, 2001; Honey, 1997). It is also worth noting that Standard English norms are not written in concrete, are disputed by language experts and vary over time. Yet in 1918, when the book *The elements of style* had just been copyrighted, Strunk wrote, that despite the current “practically unanimous agreement as to the spelling of most words”, changes are not far away:

At any given moment, however, a relatively small number of words may be spelled in more than one way. Gradually, as a rule, one of these forms comes to be generally preferred, and the less customary form comes to look obsolete and is discarded. From time to time new forms, mostly simplifications, are introduced by innovators, and either win their place or die of neglect (the original version cited in Strunk & White, 1959, p. 60-61).

Plotnik (1982) writes that “standard (or ‘formal’) usually means the way language is used by those community members considered educated and well spoken”, but that these experts have “hundreds of thousands of disagreements among them” regarding the use of language (p. 45).<sup>73</sup> Aitchison referred to a “so-called standard English” (Aitchison, 1997, p. 56). She wrote that “the word ‘standard’ is ambiguous: It can mean either a value which has to be met, as in ‘a high standard’, or it can mean uniform practice, as in ‘standard behaviour’”(ibid). In western journalism it is copy-editors, or sub-editors, who are ultimately responsible for good grammar, spelling and following the style. In post-USSR countries, as prior experience of this researcher in reporting in Russia for 10 years and training news reporters in seven former

---

<sup>72</sup> However, the flexibility of the online-based assessment allows the potential users to choose the preferred style by changing descriptors in the NTA.

<sup>73</sup> In one such examples of disagreement Plotnik referred to a split between the experts — 136 reputable writers and editors — who worked on the *Harper Dictionary of Contemporary Usage*. When voting on ‘data is’ vs. ‘data are’ 49 percent voted for ‘is’ and 51 percent – for ‘are’ (p. 46).

Soviet republics for 11 years shows, that as media organisations are underfunded, journalists' stories may go into print with minor or no subediting. Therefore, it is important to include this criterion into the NTA to raise its profile in the process of news writing.

### *Summary*

In conclusion, the only way to create descriptors for this criterion was to make them holistic despite the criticism that holistic criteria do not bear instructional value (see more on this in section 1.4.3.1). However, this does not mean that the instructional materials addressing mistakes should not be developed. Such materials can be developed and become part of the SET on the condition that they are prepared in native language and in accordance to the relevant house style.

## **3.6. Structure**

In this research only one type of news story will be analysed — the 'inverted pyramid' in which the most newsworthy, important and interesting information is concentrated at the top, the least important at the bottom, and the blocks in the body of the text follow in descending order of importance (Itule & Anderson, 1991; Mencher, 1994; Rich, 2009; Scanlan, 2000a; Tucker, 2008). It was chosen as a basic structural format for two main reasons. Firstly, this is the most popular and widely used standard not only by agencies and online publications, but also in newspapers (Lorenz & Vivian, 1996; Scanlan, 2000a). "[P]rint media stories frequently are structured (and have been for more than a century) in inverted pyramid style" (Grossberg, 2006, p. 355). It is "the most traditional" newspaper format (Scanlan, 2000a, p. 122) and "a basic building block of journalistic style" (ibid, p. 156). Secondly, inexperienced reporters most often write breaking stories, and for such stories the 'inverted pyramid' is used as a primary standard (Lorenz & Vivian, 1996). Thirdly, many other types of news stories are based on the 'inverted pyramid' structure (for example, 'hourglass', 'news feature' and 'news analysis'). The 'inverted pyramid' standard is flexible: it lets reporters "deliver the most important information in a paragraph or two" but, if necessary, it "permits writers to go on at great length" (Brooks, et al., 1988, p. 55) following the rule "summarize first" and "[e]xplain later" (Harrower, 2007, p. 38). This format is also widely used in reporting for online publications (Ward, 2002). The last reason for choosing the inverted pyramid structure as the basis for the 'Structure' category in this research is the space constraints of a thesis: analysing all possible structures of news stories would have taken too much space without contributing to the main targets of this research: providing scientific justification for online assessment and a virtual textbook based on it. The advantages of these instruments allow any additional information to be appended as it is being developed, including on various other structures.

This standard is “usually the first thing students learn in journalism school” (Hart, 2006, p. 45), an “essential tool in every reporter’s toolbox” (Harrower, 2007, p. 39). It is important because it provides readers with “immediate, relevant information” (Errico, 1997). It “can help increase the viewer’s and reader’s understanding of the story” (Mencher, 1994, p. 105). “Beginning reporters must learn this style because it helps them decide what is most important and what is least important. It also helps reporters discover ‘holes’ in their information — details that have not been collected and need to be found” (Fedler, Bender, Davenport, & Drager, 2005, p. 200-201). Scanlan (2000) believes that the inverted pyramid helps developing “the powers of critical thinking, analysis and synthesis that are the foundation of clarity in thinking and writing” (p. 156).

The inverted pyramid is not without faults. Fedler et al. (2005) acknowledge that it may not be easily understood by people with less than a high school education, it is overused, confusing and often irrelevant. In 1988, Brooks et al suggested that with the development of other types of news stories, the inverted pyramid standard will “become less important to newspapers” (Brooks, et al., 1988, p. 58). However, the inverted pyramid lived and remained though a “controversial yet widely used method of reporting news and will have a future in the 21st century, journalists in all media agree” (Scanlan, 2003, p. 1). Fedler et al. (2005) explain that the standard keeps working because of its inherent advantages, because of habit of using it, and because time pressure discourages using other standards which require additional thinking and rewriting. The most colourful definition the inverted pyramid was from the Associated Press' writing coach Bruce de Silva: “The inverted pyramid remains the Dracula of journalism. It keeps rising from its coffin and sneaking into the paper” (de Silva quoted by Scanlan, 2007b).

The elements of the inverted pyramid are pretty well described in literature. For instance, the building blocks as viewed by Scanlan (2000) are:

- Who are the people involved in the story: victims, rescues, speakers, opposing sides? Identify the people
- What is the story about: a car crash, a picket line, the death of a beloved figure? Describe the event
- Where did the story occur: a sun-dappled park, a crowded intersection, a trailer park, outside a small factory? Establish the place
- When did the story occur: the last day of school, 5 p.m., the dead of night, at the height of rush hour? Give the time
- How did the story happen: a driver lost control on a curve, children were playing with matches, management and labor were unable to agree about wages? Explain the circumstances
- Why did the story happen: speeding, carelessness, to raise funds, to celebrate a holiday? Explore the cause

- So what? An accident holds up traffic, a festival brings a community closer together, a strike affects customers. Assess the impact
- What next?/ Criminal charges, hospital treatment, funerals, a new traffic light, higher prices. Look ahead.

However, there is no universal agreement on the structure of the inverted pyramid that is often requested by novice reporters who — as the experience of this researcher in training shows — often want to learn some rigid schema to then fill it in with relevant content. The only clear-cut rule is that the information should be placed in descending order of importance and that the story in this format typically has the following blocks:

- intro which in most cases includes answers to ‘who’, ‘what’, ‘where’ and ‘when’ and sometimes includes ‘why’ and ‘how’ (Brooks, et al., 1988; Scanlan, 2000a; Tucker, 2008)
- a block ‘so what’ outlining importance of news (Scanlan, 2000a)
- a block that substantiates, supports, and details the intro. It does not have a universal name and is labelled differently including as ‘elaboration’ or ‘material that explains and amplifies’ the intro (Mencher, 1994), ‘details to support’ intro (Brooks, et al., 1988), ‘further development of elements’ of the intro (Lorenz & Vivian, 1996), or ‘developing intro further’ (Tucker, 2008), or ‘inform’ block that describes what is going on in sufficient details (Hogan, 2005).
- blocks on ‘why’, ‘how’ (Brooks, et al., 1988; Lorenz & Vivian, 1996; Scanlan, 2000a)
- history, which is also labelled ‘background’, or other relevant contexts (Hogan, 2005).

Optional elements include:

- additional angles and support for additional angles (Lorenz & Vivian, 1996)
- block ‘what happens next’ (Scanlan, 2000a)
- in-depth explanations (Bridges & Bridges, 1997; Geisler, 2009; Scanlan, 2000a).
- explaining impact of news (Bickler, et al., 2004; Buttry, 2005; Granato, 1991; Rich, 2009; Scanlan, 2000a).
- additional angles (Lorenz & Vivian, 1996; Mencher, 1994)
- transitions, which are crucial to the development of the story connecting blocks together (Lorenz & Vivian, 1996; Rich, 2009)
- ending, that may or may not be present (Brooks, et al., 1988; Evans, 1972; Itule & Anderson, 1991).

It is important to note that while ‘Structure’ as a category is supposed to assess the organisation of a news story, the contents of the blocks logically could also be dealt with in other criteria. For instance, the accuracy criterion of the ‘Factual quality and credibility’ category is a natural part of all the elements described above, while the content of the structure blocks ‘why’, ‘how’, ‘what happens next’ is part of the ‘Meaning’ category, and the ‘so what’ block — posed as importance of news — is part of the ‘Newsworthiness’ category. However, it was impossible to either limit the content-related criteria to be confined to a

particular structural block, or to have all structural blocks detailing their content in the 'Structure' category.

Therefore, a special holistic criterion — 'matching a standard of a news story' — was set up in order to avoid the overlapping of the content and the structure and to assess only the quality of the organisation of a news story. This criterion would assess whether the most important building blocks were used in the story that was written in the 'inverted pyramid' format, and whether the story was constructed in order of descending importance. However, because the 'inverted pyramid' is popular but not the only standard used in news reporting, this criterion was also enriched to accommodate other formats of news genre, which may include among others 'hourglass', 'five boxes', news analysis and news feature types of stories. The holistic nature of this criterion, however, needs to be elaborated in other specific criteria created in the SET to detail many elements it may include.

One element has also been specially set up for the NTA that is crucial for constructing a news story — 'focus' of the story. This criterion is not part of any other categories. Experience of this researcher shows that inexperienced journalists often cannot formulate the focus of a news story, and are unable to follow the angle chosen in the intro through the rest of the story. Therefore, bringing their attention to the need to develop the chosen focus is essential.<sup>74</sup>

As explanatory blocks including 'why', 'how', 'what happens next', 'impact', and 'explanations' are parts of other criteria in the 'Meaning' category, they have not been chosen as criteria in the 'Structure' category. However, the 'substantiation' block, despite its content being part of the 'comprehensiveness' criterion in the 'Factual quality and credibility' category, has been chosen to represent the 'Structure' category for the particular reason that journalists need to concentrate on providing sufficient detail for their intros. As experience of this researcher shows, without persistently pointing out the need to provide evidence for this block, inexperienced journalists often skip it and their stories often have no evidence to support the intro.

Two other elements that have been chosen to become individual criteria in the 'Structure' category are 'transitions' and 'ending' because they are not covered in the other categories and logically belong to the 'Structure' category.

---

<sup>74</sup> One extremely common problem at the early stages of training in news writing, as experience of this researcher shows, is writing blocks not to elaborate on the focus stated in the intro of the story, but to elaborate on the previous paragraph. This drifts the narrative sideways. In one instance when this researcher was training journalism in Siberia, a journalist used a formula 'now let's return to our sheep' to get back to the main narrative.

### *3.6.1. Matching a standard of a news story*

Inexperienced reporters often have problems not with the subtleties of the structure per se, but with matching a standard of a news story. Without the knowledge of news writing formats reporters often write in academic, technical and other possible composition options, or choosing a standard irrelevant to news reporting including feature, opinion writing or a mix of different options. As the ‘inverted pyramid’ format has been chosen as the basic for this research, the descriptors in this criterion will be two-faceted. One part will assess matching the structure to the ‘inverted pyramid’, and another part will assess matching the structure of any other format used for news writing, because reducing this criterion to only the ‘inverted pyramid’ format would substantially limit the use of the NTA. However, none of the structures will be detailed in the criterion because it would make it unwieldy.

At least two issues will be addressed when assessing the quality of the ‘inverted pyramid’ standard. Firstly, as conventions require, the information in the story should be presented in descending order of importance (Brooks et al., 1988; Evans, 1972; Itule & Anderson, 1991; Mencher, 1994; Scanlan, 2000). Secondly, all the relevant building blocks have to be present in the story (for more information about the blocks see section 3.5). The descriptors in the ‘good’ and ‘appropriate’ levels were created based on these two issues. The other descriptors have been composed using the guidelines in section 1.4.3.5.

As descriptors will have to be implicit for space reasons and contain words ‘minor’, ‘inappropriate’, ‘appropriately’ and ‘relevant’, for training purposes the instructor will have to choose the relevant descriptor with instructional materials in the SET, or explain the choice of the descriptor in a personal note if the relevant descriptor has not yet been developed.

### *3.6.2. Intro*

Several difficulties were addressed when creating the descriptors for the ‘intro’ criterion. The first problem to resolve was the potential overlapping of the descriptors in the ‘intro’ criterion with similar ones in other criteria in the NTA. For example, such elements as ‘timeliness’, ‘unexpectedness’ and ‘proximity’, which are parts of most news intros, and ‘importance’ and ‘prominence’, that are covered in some intros, are criteria of the ‘Newsworthiness’ category and assessing them again in the intro would mean duplication of the assessment of the same elements. At the same time some elements including the ‘use of descriptions’ of the ‘Style’ category and ‘attribution to sources’ of the ‘Credibility and factual quality’ category have

specific use in the intro and therefore these specifics have been exempted from their criteria<sup>75</sup> and assessed in the ‘intro’.

The other major difficulty was the enormous amount of information about writing intros in the available literature and many variations of intros which could be used even in the inverted pyramid standard.<sup>76</sup> Therefore, it was decided to confine the content of this criterion to the basic summary intro. An additional problem is that there is no possible way to list in the NTA all the elements of even the summary intro — which usually opens most news stories written in the inverted pyramid standard. The list of what the summary intro should include or take into account is rather long. The intro should:

- prioritise the 5W questions, condenses the key facts of the story into the first paragraph (Brooks et al., 1988; Harrower, 2007)
- answer several but not all the basic questions: 5W, how and so what (Fox, 2001; Rich, 2009)
- summarise news, says what the story is about (Harrower, 2007; Rich, 2009; Scanlan, 2000; Tucker, 2008)
- establish the central point for the rest of the story (Fedler et al., 2005)
- contain the most newsworthy, important, striking information (Fedler et al., 2005; Mencher, 1994; Rich, 2009)
- be accurate, clear, simple, concise, compelling, interesting (Evans, 1972; Fedler et al., 2005; Harrower, 2007; Keeble, 1994, 2005; Melton, 2002; Mencher, 1994)
- use strong verbs and be written in active voice unless passive voice helps to reach the point faster (Rich, 2009)
- explain why readers should care (Harrower, 2007)
- take into account the readership (Grundy, 2007).

The job of including these and other possible elements that various good news intros should consist of or may include is intimidating and such a scoring rubric is potentially unusable. A separate NTA could be created just to assess the quality of the intro because of its multi-facetedness and complexity. It was decided that the way out is to create a mixture of explicit and holistic descriptors: to elaborate more in the ‘bad’ descriptors, but to keep the ‘good’ descriptors more implicit. Such organisation is sound instructionally, because it is elaboration on the deficiencies that leads to learning.

Undisputable elements of intro that helped to formulate some descriptors are presented in Table 14.

**Table 14. Elements and descriptors for the criterion ‘intro’**

<i>Elements of the</i>	<i>Quality statements made in literature,</i>	<i>Elements of the descriptors in</i>
------------------------	---	---------------------------------------

<sup>75</sup> A phrase ‘except intro’ is appended to the criteria ‘use of descriptions’ and ‘attribution to sources’.

<sup>76</sup> For the explanation why the inverted pyramid standard was chosen for this research see section 3.6.



<i>criterion</i>	<i>author</i>	<i>different levels of the NTA, explanations where needed</i>
Content of intro	<p>Topic intros (e.g. The founder of the American UFO society spoke Tuesday on the subject of alien abduction) are unacceptable. Focus on issues and people (Harrower, 2007)</p> <p>Question intros are loathed by editors because they are not to the point unless they are engaging and hook a reader unto reading further (Harrower, 2007)</p> <p>Quote intros are seldom the smartest and most appealing way to start a story (Harrower, 2007). Full quotes may be confusing, readers may feel like they have come into the middle of some conversation. The meaning and the context are hard to immediately understand. Partial quotes could be used instead with backing by a full quote later in the text (Rich, 2009)</p> <p>Intro is 'buried', which means that news is put too low in the story, and the story must be reworked (Harrower, 2007)</p> <p>Avoid reporting something that might have happened but did not (Tucker, 2008)</p>	<p>It is possible to unite several grave faults in the intro — topic, question and buried intro — into one descriptor: 'misses news':</p> <p><b>'unacceptable'</b>: misses news</p> <p>Quote intros are not unacceptable if used appropriately, therefore this descriptor, with the conditions appended, could be placed in the 'inappropriate' level:</p> <p><b>'inappropriate'</b>: intro is a quote which is not self-sufficient; or intro is about news that did not happen</p>
Beginning of the intro	<p>Do not start intro with the time of news if it is not essential to write a 'when' intro (Harrower, 2007; Keeble, 1994; Rich, 2009).</p> <p>Example of an appropriate 'when' intro: "For the third time this week, a private plane crashed at Mudflap Airport..." (Harrower, 2007)</p> <p>Do not start intro with the background or the source (Tucker, 2008), or clauses (Rich, 2009)</p>	<p><b>'unacceptable'</b>: intro is not backed by a source where necessary</p> <p><b>'inappropriate'</b>: starts with the time, or the source; or the newsmaker's name where unnecessary; or with a clause or background;</p>
Clarity/verbiage	<p>The biggest problem with most intros is that they are too wordy (Harrower, 2007).</p> <p>The key points are easy to grasp, no awkward wording is present including unnecessary adjectives and phrases (Harrower, 2007) when the journalist is trying to say too much, or uses complex or ambiguous language, is too general, boring, vague or lacking facts (Tucker, 2008)</p> <p>Intro is doomed to failure if it lacks</p>	<p><b>'inappropriate'</b>: intro is unclear, wordy or confusing</p>

	<p>clarity, is obscure, confusing and needs to be read several times to understand the meaning (Tucker, 2008)</p> <p>Contains information that needs additional explanation, or foreign words which average reader may not understand (Tucker, 2008)</p> <p>Excessive use of adjectives in the intro is inappropriate (Waterhouse &amp; Waterhouse, 1993)</p> <p>Absent is “impenetratable verbiage used by politicians, bureaucrats, technicians, clerks, spin doctors, academics and experts into informal and accessible language”, which is a “matter of having the confidence to convert their pretentious nonsense into everyday-speak” (Tucker, 2008, p. 45).</p>	
Strength	<p>Active voice is used as a rule, a strong subject-verb-object sentence is used (Harrower, 2007). Avoid passive voice that lacks punch (Harrower, 2007; Rich, 2009; Tucker, 2008)</p> <p>‘There was’ or similar structures are used to start the intro instead of specific language (Harrower, 2007)</p> <p>Do not use soft verbs, such as ‘be’, ‘try’, ‘plan’, or dull bureaucratic verbs like ‘considered’, ‘met’ and ‘issued’ (Harrower, 2007)</p>	<p><b>‘inappropriate’</b>: language is weak or non-specific</p>
Details, descriptions	<p>Language is compelling, it grabs readers and keep them interested (Harrower, 2007)</p> <p>Too much detail too soon kills the intro, readers cannot digest too many facts at once. Summarise but not itemise. Intro should also not be too short, dull and undramatic (Harrower, 2007)</p> <p>Keeble (1994) gives an example of excessive details: “Do not say: “Mrs Gandhi, the Indian Prime Minister, was assassinated by Sikh bodyguards at 2.59 am today.” Sufficient to report “earlier today”. The precise detail can be added later (Keeble, 1994, p. 113)</p>	<p><b>‘inappropriate’</b>: contains excessive details</p> <p><b>‘appropriate’</b>: does not include relevant interest-grabbing details</p>
Length	<p>Using two sentences in the intro is acceptable, but a single clear compact sentence is preferable (Harrower, 2007)</p>	<p><b>‘inappropriate’</b>: contains excessive details</p>

	<p>Intro of 46 words is too long (Tucker, 2008)</p> <p>Most intros have fewer than 30 words (Harrower, 2007)</p> <p>Answering all the 5W, how and so what questions in the intro will make it cumbersome (Rich, 2009). Two or three of the 5WH questions could be answered in the intro (Keeble, 1994)</p> <p>Too long explanatory parenthetical clauses are inappropriate (Tucker, 2008)</p>	
Circumstances of where and when something was said	Too much of such information clutters the intro. The ‘when’ can be used in the second paragraph, the ‘where’ — if it is important to the reader — further down in the story, or eliminated if it is not important (Rich, 2009)	<b>‘inappropriate’</b> : contains excessive details
Creative intros	<p>An alternative approach to writing intros is the attempt “to draw in the reader through imagery, narrative devices, perspective or other creative means” (article about the Associated Press quoted in Rich, 2009)</p> <p>Focus on a person to explain impact of news by using anecdotal intro (Rich, 2009)</p>	<p>Because finding a person who would be affected by the news requires additional effort, using anecdotal intros appropriately should be considered an outstanding performance:</p> <p><b>‘outstanding’</b>: anecdotal intro is used appropriately; or intro is creative, and it suits the content, mood and tone of the story</p> <p>To stimulate reporters to write creative intros the descriptor for the ‘good’ level could approve of the effort if such intro has a minor deficiency</p> <p><b>‘good’</b>: creative intro has a minor deficiency</p>
Attribution	<p>Too much attribution clutters the intro. Many leads need just general attribution to the source as the full title may be too cumbersome to use in the intro. The specific attribution may be in one of the next paragraphs (Rich, 2009)</p> <p>Contains a long full name of an organisation, or is cluttered by too many names or titles (Tucker, 2008)</p> <p>Move attributions to the end of intro. The newsmaker’s or source’s name should be used in the intro only if it is familiar to</p>	<p>For space reasons, the descriptor is generalised to combine both – excessive details in content and excessive details of attribution. The descriptors elaborating on what exactly is excessive are part of the virtual textbook</p> <p><b>‘inappropriate’</b>: contains excessive details; starts with the source or a newsmaker’s</p>

	<p>most of the news consumers (which means the name is newsworthy), otherwise use the person's job title or credentials (Harrower, 2007).</p> <p>There is no need to attribute information in the intro if the statement is factual (e.g. "A 2-year-old girl escaped injury when a mattress she was sitting on caught fire and engulfed the studio apartment in flames at Wheatshocker Apartments") (Rich, 2009, p 53)..</p> <p>No attribution is also needed if the information was witnessed by a reporter, or a reporter has firsthand knowledge it is true (Rich, 2009) with the exception of information obtained by the phone</p> <p>However, if any accusatory statement or opinion is used, attribution should be used (e.g. "A 2-year-old girl escaped injury when a mattress she was sitting on caught fire and engulfed the studio apartment in flames at Wheatshocker Apartments near Witchita State University that caused about \$400,000 in damages, fire authorities said Thursday" (Rich, 2009)</p> <p>Any quotes or partial quotes must be attributed (Rich, 2009)</p>	<p>name where unnecessary</p> <p><b>'unacceptable'</b>: intro is not backed by a source where necessary</p>
--	--	---

As usual, to formulate the 'outstanding' level of performance the guidelines in section 1.4.3.5 were used, which suggest that creativity may be the additional element of quality that could make the story shine. Of course, an anecdotal intro is not a summary intro, but providing the opportunity to look further than basic reporting may stimulate journalists to develop additional expertise. As explained above, the descriptors in the 'acceptable' and the 'good' level are more implicit containing words 'minor' and 'most', and using these descriptors should be additionally explained.

### 3.6.3. *Focus*

Focus is a short and clear "central idea", "main point", or the "main idea" (Rich, 2009, p. 11, 36, 162) of the story, a statement of the story's most important, current and newsworthy issue that is relevant for readers. Focus differs from the notion of the 'topic' which is too broad and concerns the subject on which the story is written. The topic may, for example, be AIDS, while the focus may be one aspect of the problem, for example, problems with treatment of people with AIDS (Rich, 2009). The focus may be expressed in the headline, intro, or nut

graf<sup>77</sup> (Rich, 2009). Journalists need the focus to construct the story around it and to let the readers immediately understand what the story is about:

Because readers and viewers are bombarded with so much information these days, they want to know the point of the story quickly, so you need to put the focus in the first sentence or within the first few paragraphs of the story (Rich, 2009, p. 36).

Such an understanding of the focus is nearly non-existent in many of the media in post-authoritarian countries. The traditions of news reporting from the times of dictatorships were reporting news about meetings of politicians and authorities and speeches by various figureheads. One journalist from the Russian Siberian town of Tomsk, a graduate of the journalism department of the local university, wrote about her understanding of news journalism: “I thought I knew all that there was to know about journalism and it seemed uninteresting to me, especially news journalism — all these boring meetings ...”<sup>78</sup>

Stories without focusing on an issue are typical, not only of journalism in transitional countries, but also of those written by inexperienced journalists in any country. Lack of focus may be a reason for writer’s block (Clark, 2010):

There are many reasons why a writer may not be able to get going. Sometimes it’s because the idea has not been refined or that the reporting is deficient. But the real key is focus, focus, focus. Does the writer know what the story is about? The main thing you want to say? The lead? The nut graph? The key to fast writing and breaking the block is to look for your focus from the very beginning of the process.

Harrower (2007) gives an example of how to find the ‘main emphasis’ of the story written from a meeting in local newspapers in the United States. Criticising the initial intro “A proposal to install parking meters on Boinck Street was a topic of hot debate at Tuesday’s city council meeting”, he wrote that it is dull because it misses the point. “The proposal isn’t the story. The meeting isn’t the story. The impact on your readers is the story. That’s got to be the main emphasis.” His suggestion for the intro, which determines how the story will unfold, is: “Students will pay to park on Boinck Street starting Jan. 1, thanks to a measure passed by the city council Tuesday” (ibid).

Scanlan (2000) suggests a set of questions and techniques to help find the focus of the story. First, the questions ‘what’s the news?’ and ‘what’s the story?’ should be clarified, then, focus should be formulated in six words, and finally the ‘so what’ question answered.

Several other statements helped create the descriptors for the ‘focus’ criterion:

---

<sup>77</sup> In this research this block is categorised under the name of ‘importance’ ([see more in Appendix 4](#))

<sup>78</sup> Impact report on online training in Russia in 2003, funded by the US training provider, IREX. She wrote further: “After I understood what the NEWS really is, my attitude to news journalism completely changed” (emphasis in original).

- Story is based on one relevant to the readers, important, current and newsworthy issue. The story becomes more relevant to the readers if it stresses how the readers will be affected by the news (Rich, 2009).
- The rest of the story should support the focus, providing facts and other information to elaborate on it (Rich, 2009).
- Even covering meetings, only one key issue should be selected for the focus. Other important issues could go into a separate story or be mentioned in the top of the story, but developed after the key issue is supported (Rich, 2009).
- Do not focus on the meeting or on the proposals at the meeting if the impact on the readers can be the main emphasis (Harrower, 2007).

As usual, the ‘outstanding’ level of quality was a challenge to come up with. But using the guidelines in section 1.4.3.5 helped to formulate the descriptor which involves more effort for the journalist to make the story more engaging: relevancy to most or many readers.

**‘outstanding’:** is out of the ordinary, fresh, powerful, relevant to most or many readers and it is strongly followed throughout the story

#### 3.6.4. *Substantiation block*

News stories need to have “enough material to develop and support” the intro (Tucker, 2008, p. 46). However, there is no universal understanding of what exactly this structural block should contain and there is no universal name for this block. For instance, Randall (2000) suggests that ‘elaboration’ of the intro should include direct quotes. Rich (2009) writes that ‘elaboration’ can be “statements, quotes or more detail to explain what happened, how and why the problem or action occurred, and reactions to the event” (ibid, p. 42). In such an understanding of ‘elaboration’, anything below the intro and higher than the ending could be labelled ‘elaboration’, and so broad a definition has little instructional value.

A narrower understanding of what constitutes the substantiation of the intro is given by Evans (1972) and Hogan (2005). These authors consider a separate structural block which directly supports the intro. Evans labels the block ‘substantiation’, and Hogan labels it the ‘inform’ block. This block supports the intro without explaining how and why news occurred. Evans’ example (which is too long to use here) substantiates the intro with more details about what is going on and a quotation. Hogan’s example does the same:

Intro: A preacher will go on trial Tuesday in the death of an autistic child last summer at a storefront church

‘Inform’ block: Ray A. Hemphill faces a charge of felony child abuse, which carries a maximum sentence of five years in prison and five more on extended supervision.

In the ‘inform block’ the name of the preacher is given and the charge is detailed.

Other authors show similar understanding of the block that details the intro: ‘material that explains and amplifies’ the intro (Mencher, 1994), ‘details to support’ intro (Brooks et al., 1988)’, ‘further development of elements’ of the intro (Lorenz & Vivian, 1996)’, or

‘developing intro further’ (Tucker, 2008). In examples that are given in textbooks this block usually includes not only the details of the intro, but also anecdotes and quotes.

It is important to specify the location of the ‘substantiation’ block. Both Evans and Hogan in their examples situate the block high in the story: in Evans’ example in the third paragraph below the intro and in the block in which the importance of the story is specified, and in Hogan’s example it is located in the second paragraph. Most descriptors in this criterion include both the quality of the block and its location. The difficulty with the formulation of the ‘outstanding’ descriptor was overcome by applying it to contentious stories that are more difficult to treat. One of the ‘unacceptable’ descriptors also applies to stories with controversies.

As some descriptors contain implicit words — ‘insufficiently’, and ‘too large’ — for training purposes the instructor will have to apply the relevant descriptor with instructional materials in the SET, or explain the choice of the descriptor in a personal note if the relevant descriptor has not yet been developed.

### 3.6.5. *Transitions, logical links*

Transitions play a critical role in the development of stories (Lorenz & Vivian, 1996). They connect paragraphs, alert readers about some change to come (Itule & Anderson, 1991), and “help stories move from one fact to the next in a smooth, logical order” (Fedler et al., 2005, p. 215; Hart, 2006). Grundy (2007) notes that lack of transition breaks the logic of the story — for example if the following paragraph elaborates on another issue than stated in the previous paragraph. Succeeding paragraphs in a story should introduce new information on the back of something that the readers already know.

The exception to this rule is using transitional words signalling change of direction such as ‘however’, ‘but’, ‘meanwhile’ (Grundy, 2007); or by transitional words relating to time: ‘next’, ‘often’; or addition: ‘again’, ‘also’, ‘beyond’, ‘other’; or causation ‘accordingly’, ‘consequently’, ‘therefore’; or comparison: ‘contrary’, ‘identical’, ‘opposite’, ‘different’; or contrast: ‘although’, ‘if’, ‘still’, ‘until’, ‘yet’, ‘while’, ‘despite’ (Fedler et al., 2005); or other words including: ‘in addition’, ‘previously’, ‘finally’, ‘on a related issue’, ‘for one thing’, ‘instead’ (Harrower, 2007), ‘thus’, ‘and’, ‘or’, ‘yet’, ‘for’, or ‘nor’ (Hart, 2006).

Journalists can use several ways of creating transitions, which may or may not carry meaning. Meaningful transitions, that should demonstrate relationships between paragraphs (Hart, 2006) include:

- transitional sentences that link paragraphs yet contain diverse ideas. Such sentences should contain an interesting detail about the forthcoming topic and not just say that another idea was discussed or introduced. Bad: She also commented on the

legislators' overriding of the governor's veto. Good: She said the legislators' overriding of the governor's veto would anger supporters of the death penalty (Fedler et al., 2005, p. 217).

- leading into a quotation with a paraphrase that explains the context of the speaker's comment. Example: Berthelot acknowledges there are drugs in the Roser Park area. "See those people?" he says from his cruiser, pointing to a yard full of people huddled around a checkerboard in nearby Campbell Park. "They're selling dope" (Scanlan, 2000, p. 224).
- relating new ideas to the ideas reported earlier in the story (Fedler et al., 2005) or elaborating on the ideas in the previous paragraph (Grundy, 2007).

Other ways to create logical transitions include:

- repeating a key name, or pronoun, idea or phrase (Fedler et al., 2005; Hart, 2006).
- including in the succeeding paragraph an element of the story that is recognisable (if not in same words, at least instantly recognisable) in the preceding par (Grundy, 2007).
- posing questions, which should be short and should be immediately followed by the new topic or detail that the reporter introduces. Example: How does he manage to play piano so well at such a young age? "Practice," he said, the freckles blossoming with the smile that spread across his 7-year-old face. "I practice four hours a day – every day. I practice even when I don't feel like it" (Fedler et al., 2005, p. 217).

Meaningless transitions are also often used, especially by novice reporters. Rich (2009) mentions a 'parroting technique': when transitions say the same as the following quotation says. She suggests eliminating one or the other. The experience of this researcher shows that often inexperienced reporters instead of using a transition just write the name and title, colon, and then put a quotation from the source, as if preparing a draft to read on radio. In many post-USSR countries there is also a habit of writing meaningless transitions of the kind 'we asked such-and-such person to comment on this issue and that is what he or she said,' colon, quote.

Transitions are not always needed when the natural progression of thought or sequence of facts and action are natural ((Fedler et al., 2005; Rich, 2009), or the material has been "carefully organized" (Hart, 2006, p. 66). Another case when transitions are not needed are in short news stories, news alerts, and briefs.

### 3.6.6. *Ending*

"Endings are important as well as openings. Not as important, but still worth thinking about" (Randall, 2000, p. 178). With the appearance of computers the need to cut the end of the story if it does not fit the hole in the newspaper is no longer valid, and any story can be trimmed in the middle as well as at the end (Hart, 2006). Some stories deserve "strong ending" he points out, calling it a "crowning touch" that creates a sense of completion, leaving readers satisfied (ibid, p. 68).



[T]he ending is, after all, the reader's last taste of the story. It's the bit he remembers best because it's freshest in mind, and it colors his perception of everything that came before. What's the point of all the hard work on the beginning and middle of a draft if it's ruined by a few careless words tacked on at the end? (ibid).

There are several versions of what should constitute the ending of a news story:

- a quote that summarises the previous information (Hart, 2006; Itule & Anderson, 1991; Rich, 2009). The quote “should tie readers emotionally to the story, reminding them that the writing has ended but that the story and the people involved in it have not” (Itule & Anderson, 1991, p. 133). The best quotations are “dramatic” (Hart, 2006, p. 71)
- loop back to the beginning “closing a circle, tying the whole story together and creating a sense of completion” (Hart, 2006, p. 68)
- more elaboration (Rich, 2009)
- a future action (Rich, 2009), or a quote about a future action (Rich, 2009; Scanlan, 2000)
- less important information (Brooks et al., 1988)
- no ending if there is no more information to reveal (Itule & Anderson, 1991; Rich, 2009; Scanlan, 2000; Scanlan, 2007)
- contextual information including background or statistics (Scanlan, 2000).

There are also issues about what endings should not be. They should not contain information that makes no sense for the story (Hart, 2006). They should not introduce statements that contradict the gist of the story. For example, an article published in 1987 in the *New York Times* effectively promoted Contra soldiers in Nicaragua while the ending had a passing reference to a recently released Americas Watch report that ‘the Contras systematically engage in violent abuses’ (Lee & Solomon, 1990, p. 44). Endings also “should certainly not come to one of those dreadful phoney, forced conclusions where the writer feels he has to give a verdict or give the reader a kind of farewell wave in words. But neither should they end abruptly, as if the writer just got bored, nor just meekly fade away” (Randall, 2000, p. 178).

## *Summary*

It is impossible to include all the formats that can be used in news writing in the NTA, because it would make it unwieldy. Therefore, only the ‘inverted pyramid’ format was chosen as a popular and basic format of news reporting.

As structural elements of news reporting naturally overlap with the elements dealing with content of news reporting, it was a challenge to clearly separate them. Several criteria, that have clear overlap have not been chosen to represent the ‘Structure’ category, including ‘why’, ‘how’, ‘what happens next’, ‘impact’, and ‘explanations’, which are part of the ‘Meaning’ category.

Three structural blocks — intro, ending and transitions — have been chosen to represent the ‘Structure’ category because they logically belong only to this category.

Despite the ‘substantiation’ criterion has some overlap with the ‘comprehensiveness’ criterion in the ‘Factual quality and credibility’ category, it was placed in the ‘Structure’ category for practical reasons of training: inexperienced reporters need to have a constant reminder that they should provide sufficient evidence to support the intro of a news story.

One holistic criterion was set up — matching a standard for a news story — to assess the overall quality of the organisation of writing, including the presence of all necessary blocks and putting the most important information at the top of the story.

An additional criterion — focus — was added at the discretion of this researcher based on experience that journalists find it difficult to identify and follow the focus of the story.

In conclusion, six criteria were chosen to represent the ‘Structure’ category: ‘matching a standard for a news story’, ‘intro’, ‘focus’, ‘substantiation’, ‘transitions’ and ‘ending.’

### **3.7. Conclusion**

Analysis of news writing elements showed that some criteria such as ‘timeliness’ or ‘context’ are complex, some such as ‘objectivity’ are controversial, some such as ‘ending’ are rather simple. Most news writing elements that were dealt with in this research are described in academic and professional literature only in the way they should be used at a ‘normative’, or ‘standard’ level. Some elements, including ‘accuracy’ and ‘fairness’, have descriptions of what should be considered unacceptable or bad quality. However, no descriptions of other levels of quality of these and the majority of other criteria have been found and creating the descriptors for the ‘inappropriate’, ‘acceptable’ and ‘outstanding’ levels of quality constituted the biggest difficulty in creating the scoring rubric. Therefore, in this chapter three approaches were used to create the descriptors: deductions from statements and examples in literature, guidelines which suggest various grounds for creating and allocating descriptors into relevant levels of quality described in section 1.4.3.5, and the experience of this researcher in online training of news reporters in post-USSR countries. As a last resort, the descriptors were formulated as points on the continuum between the neighbouring levels.

However, in a small number of criteria it appeared to be impossible to come up with explicit descriptors and, therefore, descriptors such as ‘has minor deficiencies’ were used for the ‘‘good’ level of performance. These descriptors should be used on the condition that coders and trainers accompany them with personal explanations of the choice of the descriptor.

Despite one goal of this research being to create an explicit and self-contained system of assessment of the quality of news stories, in which each element could be identified in news texts, it appeared unachievable. Many descriptors indeed are linked to the presence of cues in the text, enabling patterns to be observed that make it easy to apply descriptors to assess news texts. For instance, it is relatively easy to see if ‘importance’ is formulated and is located at the top of the story, or if the story has several sides speaking on a controversial issue, or if it outlines the impact the news may have or has. However, all the — possibly, millions — of descriptions that constitute news writing skills are simply impossible to fit into the news assessment system. What is much more important than to regulate every step and thus equate journalists with a golfing gorilla<sup>79</sup> with perfect, but rigid skills, is to give journalists the sense of what they should think about when writing news. The ‘if needed’ or ‘where relevant’ phrases, which on the one hand make some descriptors implicit, on the other hand are likely to make journalists think about what they write as they use the NTA as an instructional rubric<sup>80</sup> Those who would like to use the NTA for assessment can support their choice of an implicit descriptor with a personal note to a student or a trainee.

Two criteria were identified as the core of the NTA – ‘accuracy’ and ‘objectivity as a method’. Accuracy is a ‘bedrock of credibility’, the ‘journalistic Grail’, and the foundation of everything else that journalism is built on. Objectivity is a more controversial element, but as a professional discipline, as sets of professionally recognised rituals, strategies and routines it helps journalists to avoid slant and bias and is likely to protect them from being accused of libel. Being the core elements means that problems with accuracy and objectivity as a method of news writing have greater negative impact on the quality of a news story than deficiencies in other elements of news writing and this should be taken into account when creating the system of assessment of news writing.

The use of objectivity as a method has limitations in times of war and major crises, particularly when it is a national crisis, or war in journalists’ own country, and it is reported by local journalists for the local audience. The period when journalists report the war as ‘our war’ as opposed to ‘the war’, as analysis of the literature shows, depends on the crisis, on the nation, and very likely on the journalistic culture. In coverage of the war in Vietnam this period lasted many years despite the United States’ media by that time having fairly a developed notion of objectivity. This period was shortened to only about three weeks after the 9-11 crisis. However, reporters outside journalism cultures with established standards of objectivity and accuracy, who are traumatised by wars or live through frozen crises, are likely

---

<sup>79</sup> See section 3.2.7 ‘general interest’ in the ‘Newsworthiness’ category for the details of this analogy

<sup>80</sup> Instructional rubrics are described in section 1.4.3

to maintain the coverage as being of ‘our war’. Such issues cannot be addressed by a descriptor in the NTA, and special extensive training is needed if such coverage is to change. This issue, however, is outside the scope of this thesis for space reasons.

One criterion of the ‘Factual quality and credibility’ category’ labelled ‘circumstances in which information was obtained’ did not have obvious patterns of use that have been described in literature. Neither textbooks nor academic publications give explicit recommendations of the conditions in which the circumstances in which information was obtained should be shown or when they should be skipped so as not to clutter the text. The benchmark of the ‘good’ level of quality was established in this research as follows: ‘circumstances in which information was obtained are provided if information was obtained in an unusual situation, including not in a face-to-face interview or by phone from a local non-VIP source based in the same location, and the circumstances are relevant to the story; or circumstances are not provided if they are routine or obvious’. This means that in most cases such circumstances do not have to be provided.

In the next chapters another teaching tool will be described which would allow the users to use subdescriptors of lower levels for both assessment and instruction — a scoring e-textbook, or SET.

## Chapter 4.      **Developing the NTA**

In this chapter the mechanism of creating the criterion-based scoring rubric to assess news texts, or NTA, will be presented<sup>81</sup>. The NTA will further serve as a basis for the e-textbook, or SET, which will be described in Chapter 5. To create the NTA, a complex framework of considering the content and relative values of the rubric's elements, which involved correlation and factor analyses, was employed to create the weightings for the criteria that constitute it.

The NTA was created on the basis of its precursor, the NTA1, the process of the construction of which is described in Chapter 3. The process included creating the categories, criteria, and descriptors in criteria and was based on analysis of literature and experience of this researcher in face-to-face and online training of news journalists in six post-USSR countries. The NTA1 consists of 5 categories ('Newsworthiness', 'Factual quality and credibility', 'Meaning', 'Style' and 'Structure'), 30-criteria and many descriptors in each cell of the scoring rubric that has 5 categories of quality (see the NTA1 in Appendix 3).

The NTA was developed because the NTA1 was too long, as shown during the process of testing the NTA1 in which highly qualified experts were applying it to assess news stories. Some experts took more than an hour to assess one story. As analysis of literature shows, shorter assessment instruments have more chance of being used in practice (Popham, 1997).

The methodology of the creation of the NTA and the description of top journalism experts who assessed the stories, is presented in Chapter 2. In short, 23 coders assessed 10 news stories of varying quality written by journalists in several countries mostly on matters of moderate or high social importance. The articles, which can be found in Appendix 1, were prepared in advance. Each expert used two assessment formats. One was the NTA1 with 30 criteria, plus at the end of the assessment experts gave a holistic rating to an article for its general quality (referred to later as the 'overall-full grade'). The second format was a short grid in which experts assessed only the quality of five categories from 'Newsworthiness' to 'Structure', and also gave each article an overall rating for its general quality (referred to later as the 'overall-short grade'). Every expert used both formats and assessed half of the stories using the full format and half of the stories using the short format. Both types of overall grades were further used as external measures in the correlation analysis. The overall-short

---

<sup>81</sup> The technical aspects of the website on which the NTA and the SET, which is described in Chapter 5, have been specially developed for training by self-employed webmaster Ivan Suslin (based in Turku, Finland) using his own platform and know-how

grades served as external measures of ‘goodness’ to which the ratings of 30 criteria, assigned by the raters who used the full scheme, were correlated. The overall-full grade was the external measure of the ‘goodness’ to which the ratings of the categories assigned by the raters who used the short scheme were correlated. This design is outlined in Figure 8 of Chapter 2.

The correlation analysis of the assessment data was the primary instrument, or principal components analysis, yields results similar to factor analysis (Field, 2005) but was supplementary because of insufficient data. Validating experimental tools in two steps following two waves of collecting data has been used previously by Bostic, Rubio, & Hood (2000), who also used factor analysis as confirmatory only. Several aspects of validity including content validity, internal structure and relations to external variables (Miller & Linn, 2000), the convergent and the discriminant validity were analysed to develop the criteria and weight the scoring rubric. The convergent validity was understood as high if it was closely and coherently related to other criteria within the same category both statistically and in meaning. Discriminant validity was understood as the absence of undue relationship to criteria in other categories (Field, 2005; Messick, 1995). The content and the criterion-related validity were defined as the extent to which criteria correlated with some external indicator of the same attribute (Miller & Linn, 2000; Walsh & Betz, 1995). Two external indicators were used: the overall-short grades were the external measure to which the quality of criteria was correlated, and the overall-full grades were the external indicators to which the quality of categories was correlated. Spearman 2-tailed correlation coefficients ( $\rho$ ) were computed between all the ratings.

Varimax with Kaiser normalisation was used as a rotation method in the principal components analysis. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was .861, which is considered to be good as it falls into the range between 0.8 and 0.9 while 0.5 is considered acceptable and values above 0.9 are superb (Hutcheson & Sofroniou, 1999). The Bartlett’s test of sphericity testing the null hypothesis that the original correlation matrix is an identity one, is highly significant ( $p < 0.001$ ) which means that factor analysis is appropriate (Field, 2005).

The factor analysis explained 64 percent of the variance and was able to identify the criteria with the smallest item loadings on their factor. The analysis was made for the four-factor, five-factor, six-factor and seven-factor models and the most meaningful appeared to be the six-factor model. The results of the correlation and factor analyses allowed the researcher to reject the criteria which appeared insignificant, confusing and had relatively low discriminant validity. The analyses also helped to shorten the rubric by combining criteria with high correlations between them, which were also close in meaning.

## 4.1. Results

### 4.1.1. Factors after the rotation

The results are presented in Table 12. Columns 2 to 4 represent the results of the principal components analysis, and columns 5 to 7 the correlation coefficients.

After the rotation the core factors of two of the categories — ‘Factual quality and credibility’ and ‘Structure’ merged into the first factor with the inclusion of one criterion — ‘explanations’ from the ‘Meaning’ category. The first factor explained 19.838 per cent of total variance and united 12 out of 30 criteria. The factor effectively combined most of the criteria from the ‘Factual quality and credibility’ category and the ‘Structure’ category.

The second factor explained 12.148 per cent of the total variance and united five criteria from three categories of the NTA1: ‘details’, ‘journalist’s voice’ and ‘use of quotes’ of the ‘Style’ category, ‘human interest’ of the ‘Newsworthiness’ category and ‘people’s voice’ of the ‘Meaning’ category. If considered as a separate construct, it could have received the name ‘Appeal’ — or, perhaps, ‘Human interest’ category, because the criteria have to do with matters that are likely to engage readers with the story.

The third factor based on three criteria from the ‘Style’ category combined elements representing writing quality and explained 10.200 per cent of the total variance.

The fourth factor, which explained 9.367 per cent of the total variance, was effectively the ‘Newsworthiness’ category with the exception of two criteria, one of which — ‘human interest’ — emigrated to the second factor, and ‘prominence’ solely formed the sixth factor, which explained 4.830 per cent of the variance.

The fifth factor which explained 7.606 of the variance was formed by three criteria of the ‘Meaning’ category featuring the sense-making dimension of news articles — ‘context’, ‘impact’ and ‘practical use’.

**Table 15. Item information**

<i>Number of the criterion</i>	<i>Number of the category /number of the factor</i>	<i>Name of the criteria in the instructional rubric</i>	<i>Item loading on factor</i>	<i>Rho with overall-full grade/significance level</i>	<i>Rho with overall-short grade/significance level</i>	<i>Rho with relevant category</i>
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

1	2/1	Description of sources	0.793	.541 .0001	.288 .003	.429 .0001
2	2/1	Attribution to sources	0.752	.489 .0001	.173 .075	.253 .008
3	2/1	Accuracy	0.745	.701 .0001	.275 .004	.334 .0001
4	2/1	Objectivity as a method	0.740	.562 .0001	.441 .0001	.461 .0001
5	3/1	Explanations	0.641	.634 .0001	.304 .001	.307 .0001
6	2/1	Description of circumstances of getting information	0.604	.451 .0001	.303 .005	.305 .004
7	5/1	Matching a news story standard	0.600	.616 .0001	.378 .0001	.381 .0001
8	2/1	Comprehensiveness	0.560	.787 .0001	.365 .0001	.384 .0001
9	5/1	Intro	0.556	.711 .0001	.408 .0001	.427 .0001
10	5/1	Focus	0.550	.661 .0001	.264 .005	.247 .009
11	5/1	Ending	0.534	.622 .0001	.393 .0001	.311 .001
12	2/1	Substantiation	0.457	.689 .0001	.283 .003	.301 .002
13	1/2	Human interest	0.833	.145 0.004	.132 0.167	0.055 0.599
14	3/2	People's voice	0.794	.273 0.009	.252 .016	.254 .015
15	4/2	Details	0.703	.340 0.0001	.315 .003	.326 .002
16	4/2	Journalist's voice	0.571	.417 0.0001	.364 .0001	.219 .022
17	4/2	Use of quotes	0.543	.559 0.0001	.534 .0001	.471 .0001
18	5/3	Transitions	0.688	.638	.366	.419



				0.0001	.0001	.0001
19	4/3	Use of language	0.659	.514 0.0001	.313 .001	.368 .0001
20	4/3	Grammar and spelling	0.518	.510 .0001	.267 .007	.290 .003
21	1/4	Importance	0.797	.091 .341	-.071 .457	.193 .042
22	1/4	Conflict	0.680	.292 .009	.131 .248	.314 .005
23	1/4	Proximity	0.654	.331 .0001	.019 .848	.006 .949
24	1/4	Unexpectedness	0.538	.223 .022	.118 .229	.084 .395
25	1/4	General interest	0.527	.403 .0001	.169 .078	.231 .015
26	1/4	Timeliness	0.467	.142 .138	.029 .760	.121 .209
27	3/5	Practical use	0.690	.418 .0001	.286 .015	.207 .080
28	3/5	Context	0.537	.585 .0001	.272 .004	.171 .075
29	3/5	Impact	0.515	.562 .0001	.347 .0001	.361 .0001
30	1/6	Prominence	0.757	.018 .885	-.11 .928	.053 .673

Columns 5 to 7 in Table 15 present correlation coefficients and the levels of their statistical significance between the criteria and the overall-short grades for articles, between the criteria and the relevant category they were assigned to in the instructional rubric, and between the categories and the overall-full grades. It shows that correlations between the criteria in the full scheme of assessment and the overall-full grades are higher for all the criteria, because the data obtained from the same experts are correlated, and the data are paired. Correlations between the criteria in the full scheme of assessment and the overall-short grades are lower, because the data is non-paired as were correlated to a different group of experts. Criteria with the highest significant correlations with the overall-short grade were: ‘use of quotes’ (.534), ‘objectivity’ (.441), and ‘intro’ (.408). It is interesting, and hard to explain, that such criteria

as 'ending' (.393) and 'transitions' (.366) were higher correlated to the overall-short grade than 'matching of a news story standard' (.378), 'comprehensiveness' (.365), 'journalist's voice' (.364) 'impact' (.347), and 'explanations' (.304). Two criteria were correlated with the overall-short grade negatively: 'importance' (-.71) and 'prominence' (-.11). This is rather easy to explain: importance of stories did not necessarily relate to their 'goodness' as a well-written story, or, perhaps, the coders expected higher quality from important stories. Prominence in the sample of stories that were assessed was not associated with celebrities, but with the known institutions or high-ranking officials, and, perhaps, the coders also expected higher quality of such stories.

Almost the same set of criteria that highly correlated with the overall-short grades had high significant correlations with their own categories: 'use of quotes' with 'Style' (.471), 'objectivity' with the 'Factual quality and credibility' (.461), 'intro' (.427), 'ending' (.311) and 'transitions' (.419) with their 'Structure' category. 'Comprehensiveness' highly correlated with the 'Factual quality and credibility' (.384), 'impact' (.361) and 'explanations' with 'Meaning' (.307). The criterion 'journalist's voice' of the 'Style' category had the lowest correlation of this set of criteria with its category - .219. However, a few other criteria also correlated rather highly with their categories: 'description of sources' of the 'Factual quality and credibility' category (.429), as well as 'use of language' of the 'Style' category (.368), and 'accuracy of the 'Factual quality and credibility' category (.334).

The purpose of the further processing of the data was to reduce the number of criteria in the rubric and to use the correlation coefficients to create the weightings of each criterion in the NTA2. The data were processed in several ways. Some of the criteria with relatively high convergent evidence were combined. The criteria which appeared confusing to the coders were either rejected or had their names changed to avoid ambiguity. Some criteria were rejected for their minuscule correlation with the overall grades. Some criteria, which had a particular identity and a significant role in the overall grades kept their independence and role in the NTA2.

It should be noted that neither the categories created in this research, nor the factors which were considered, are independent from each other. The categories that were examined were not even expected to have high discriminant validity, because all of them are part of one process — writing. Therefore, when analysing the results of the correlation and factor analysis it was considered expedient to assess the relative links between the elements including the criteria that demonstrate high correlation between each other.

#### 4.1.2. *The combined criteria*

The first three items with strong links between them and the biggest loading on the factor were ‘description of sources’, ‘attribution to sources’ and ‘accuracy’ (rho from .525 to .588,  $P < 0.0001$ ). These criteria are also connected in their meaning and all three are also strongly linked to the ‘description of circumstances’, another criterion in the same factor which relates to giving additional credibility to the accuracy of reporting by describing the ways in which information was obtained (.652,  $P < 0.0001$  with ‘description of sources’, .583  $P < 0.0001$  with ‘attribution’ and .367,  $P < 0.001$  with accuracy. Therefore, these four criteria may be combined with the justification that they represent one construct — ‘accuracy and credibility’.

Five of the six criteria of the ‘structure’ category — ‘matching standard’, ‘intro’, ‘substantiation’, ‘focus’ and ‘ending’ — which are also part of the first factor are strongly related between themselves with correlation coefficients between .512 and .618,  $P < 0.0001$ . The correlation coefficients between most of them — ‘matching standard’, ‘focus’ ‘intro and ‘ending’ were between .529 and .665,  $P < 0.0001$  and the contribution of all of them in both overall grades was statistically significant. But the intro has traditionally been one of the most important elements of a news story which plays a decisive role in whether a reader will proceed to reading the story beyond the first paragraph. The ‘intro’ criterion also has the second strongest correlation to the ‘overall-full grade’ (rho .711,  $P < 0.0001$ ) after the ‘comprehensiveness’ criterion (.787,  $P < 0.0001$ ), followed by ‘accuracy’ (.710,  $P < 0.0001$ ). This unique role of the intro warrants singling it out from the rest of the ‘structure’ category criteria while the remaining criteria may be united under the name of ‘structure’.

The ‘use of quotes’ criteria had the strongest of all the second factor’s items’ correlation to both overall-full and overall-short grades (.559 and .534,  $< 0.0001$  respectively). Therefore, despite it having the smallest item loading of 0.543 on the second factor, it was not discarded. Because of its strong correlation to the ‘people’s voices’ criteria, to which it is close in meaning (.513,  $P < 0.0001$ ), these criteria were combined under the name of ‘use of quotes’.

The ‘use of language’, ‘grammar and spelling’ and ‘transitions’ criteria all had strong correlations to the overall-full grade (.514, .510 and .638 respectively, all  $P < 0.0001$ ), and to the overall-short grade (.313 ( $P < 0.001$ ), .267 ( $P < 0.01$ ) and .366 ( $P < 0.0001$ ). All of them were also closely connected with the correlation coefficients between them ranging from .539 to .586, all  $P < 0.0001$ . They were combined into one ‘use of language’ criterion.

One set of the combined criteria represents ‘newsworthiness’. Most of the elements of this category formed the fourth factor, but one criterion — ‘human interest’ — emigrated to the second factor where it was rejected, and one criterion — ‘prominence’ — to the sixth factor

where it is a single element. The most unexpected finding in the ‘Newsworthiness’ category was the fact that ‘importance’, the item with the biggest item loading of .797 in the factor, had an insignificant link to the overall grades: .091 to the ‘overall-full’ and even a negative correlation -.071 with the ‘overall-short’ grade. However, it was only one of three items of the ‘Newsworthiness’ category which had a statistically significant link to the ‘Newsworthiness’ category (correlation coefficient .193,  $P < 0.05$ ). The other two criteria are ‘conflict’ (.314,  $P < .005$ ) and ‘general interest’ (.231,  $P < .015$ )<sup>82</sup>. Insignificant correlations of most criteria that constitute this category with the overall-short grade make it impossible to single out any of them as independent items in the NTA2 and therefore it was decided that the category will be downgraded to a criterion, but keep its name of ‘newsworthiness’. However, because holistic assessment of ‘newsworthiness’ is not beneficial to either assessment or training, it was decided to combine the most important descriptors in the six remaining criteria of the category when creating the NTA.

The ‘context’ criterion, which correlates highly to both ‘overall full grade’ (.585,  $P < 0.0001$ ) and the ‘overall-short grade’ (.272,  $P < 0.01$ ), is closely linked statistically and in its meaning with the ‘explanations’ criterion (rho .612,  $P < 0.0001$ ). The ‘explanations’ criterion also highly correlates to both ‘overall-short’ and ‘overall-full’ grades (.634,  $P < 0.0001$  and .304,  $P < 0.001$ ). Both of these elements are designed to provide the reader with explanations, deep insight on news and help them place it in their system of values. Therefore, they may be combined in one criterion under the name of ‘explanations.’

#### 4.1.3. *The rejected criteria*

One rejected criterion was ‘human interest’. It is highly interrelated with ‘people’s voices’ and ‘details’: the correlation coefficients between these criteria were higher than .496 and include the highest correlations between the criteria in this research: .710,  $P < 0.0001$  between ‘human interest’ and ‘details’ and .701,  $P < 0.0001$  between the ‘human interest’ and the ‘people’s voices’. Such high correlations and high convergent validity may mean that ‘human interest’ as a criterion does not have much of its own character. Its main content was featuring anecdotes and personal examples, and it may have fallen in the same underlying construct as the ‘details’ criterion that features effect of presence, and ‘people’s voices’ that features comments by people who identify themselves with the news event. Taking into account that the ‘human interest’ criterion’s link to both overall grades is minuscule (.145 with overall-full and .142 with overall-short), this criterion was rejected from the NTA2.

---

<sup>82</sup> Rejected because of its low discriminant validity.

The ‘general interest’ criterion was one of the most peculiar of all the examined items: out of the 30 criteria examined in this study, it had strong correlations at the level of  $P < 0.01$  and higher with 26 other criteria. It may mean that it has the smallest discriminative value, but at the same time it is more likely that ‘general interest’ is a holistic integrative element of a high order that forms the relationship between the reader and the story and the factor-forming item. It has the highest of all links with the other items in this factor (correlation coefficients range from .411 to .491,  $P < 0.0001$ ). As this criterion appeared to have little discriminative value, it was rejected from the rubric.

#### *4.1.4. The criteria that kept their original content*

The criteria that kept their integrity were those which had the highest discriminant evidence, strong identity and were strongly correlated to the overall grades: ‘objectivity as a method’, ‘journalist’s voice’, ‘details’, ‘practical use’, ‘impact’ and ‘comprehensiveness’. All but the last kept their name. The ‘comprehensiveness’ criterion appeared to be strongly linked to the ‘in-depth reporting’ criterion in the first factor ( $\rho .650$ ,  $P < 0.0001$ ). However, the ‘comprehensiveness’ criterion was supposed to be related to the sufficiency of facts and figures in the story while ‘in-depth reporting’ — to the explanations of these facts. To avoid confusing the concepts, it was decided to rename the criteria ‘factual sufficiency’.

## **4.2. Scaling the NTA**

To scale the NTA1 two steps were made. Firstly, categories were weighted, and, secondly, criteria within the categories with the exception of ‘newsworthiness’ because, as described in the previous section, none of its eight criteria had significant correlation with the overall grades.

To weight the categories, the correlation coefficients between the ‘overall-full’ grades and the ratings of the categories, assessed using the short scheme, were used. The correlation coefficients between the category in the short-scheme assessment and the ‘overall-full’ grade (column 2, Table 16) were added up and equated to a 100 percent, and then the shares of each category were calculated (column 3) using the simple proportion. These shares became the weights of the categories.

To come up with the numerical ratings for the criteria the correlation coefficients between each criterion and the ‘overall-full’ grade were used (column 5). The correlation coefficients within each of the categories (column 4) were used as shares while the weighting of each category was set at 100 percent (column 3).

**Table 16. Weightings of the categories and numerical ratings for the criteria in the NTA**

<i>Category</i>	<i>Correlation coefficients between the category in the short-scheme assessment and the 'overall-full' grade</i>	<i>Weightings of the categories, %</i>	<i>Criteria and their correlation coefficients to the overall-short grade</i>		<i>Highest numerical rating for the criteria (outstanding level of quality), %</i>
1	2	3	4		5
Newsworthiness	0.266	13.3	Newsworthiness		13.3
Factual quality and credibility	0.477	23.9	Accuracy and credibility	0.303	6.5
			Objectivity as a method	0.441	9.5
			Factual sufficiency	0.365	7.9
Meaning	0.420	21.1	Explanations	0.304	6.8
			Impact	0.347	7.8
			Practical use	0.286	6.5
Style	0.371	18.6	Journalist's voice	0.364	4.5
			Details	0.315	3.8
			Use of quotes	0.534	6.5
			Use of language	0.313	3.8
Structure	0.460	23.1	Intro	0.408	12.0
			Structure	0.378	11.1
Total		100			100

To calculate the numerical ratings for the combined criteria the highest correlation coefficients to the overall-short grades (column 5) were considered because using the mean of

the rho of the group of criteria would have meant the deflation of the significance of the most important criterion of the group. For example, four elements were used in the combination of the ‘accuracy and credibility’ criterion as discussed in the ‘Results’ section:

- ‘accuracy’ (rho to the overall-short grade .275,  $P < 0.004$ )
- ‘credibility of sources’ (rho .288,  $P < 0.003$ )
- ‘attribution to sources’ (rho .173,  $P < 0.075$ )
- ‘description of the circumstances of getting information’ (rho .303,  $P < 0.005$ ).

The highest correlation coefficient among the four criteria was .303 and therefore it was used to calculate the highest numerical rating for the ‘accuracy and credibility’ criterion.

The numerical ratings (column 5) were then used as weights to represent the ‘outstanding’ level of quality within each criterion so that the highest theoretically possible overall grade for news stories would come up to a 100 points. This is a familiar scale of assessment to anyone who has studied in an educational institution. The ‘inappropriate’ level of quality was then equated to ‘0’ points because it is illogical to provide gratification, namely points, for bad quality. The weights between the ‘inappropriate’ and ‘outstanding’ gradations of quality were then computed as values along the continuum of equally distant intervals. The ‘unacceptable’ levels of quality received negative weights using the same interval below zero with the justification that grave mistakes deserve being punished by fines. The weights are represented in Table 17.

**Table 17. Weighted NTA**

<i>Levels of quality/ Names of criteria</i>	<i>Unacceptable</i>	<i>Acceptable</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Outstanding</i>
Newsworthiness	-4.4	4.4	8.9	13.3
Accuracy and credibility	-2.2	2.2	4.3	6.5
Objectivity as a method	-3.2	3.2	6.3	9.5
Factual sufficiency	-2.6	2.6	5.3	7.9
Explanations	-2.3	2.3	4.5	6.8
Impact	-2.6	2.6	5.2	7.8
Practical use	-2.2	2.2	4.3	6.5
Journalist’s voice	-1.5	1.5	3	4.5
Details	-1.3	1.3	2.5	3.8
Use of quotes	-2.2	2.2	4.3	6.5
Use of language	-1.3	1.3	2.5	3.8
Intro	-4	1.4	8	12.0

Structure	-3.7	3.7	7.4	11.1
-----------	------	-----	-----	------

\* The 'inappropriate' level is not represented because for all criteria it equalled '0'

#### 4.2.1. Discussion of the results

The biggest surprise of this research was the fact that the classic news values of newsworthiness, including 'timeliness', 'proximity', 'importance', 'prominence', 'unexpectedness' and 'conflict' (Brooks, et al., 1988; Galtung & Ruge, 1965; Mencher, 1994; Rich, 2009) appeared to have nearly no correlation with how the 'goodness' of a news story was assessed by a different group of raters. As a category, 'Newsworthiness' statistically significantly correlated with only two of the classical criteria comprising it: 'importance' (0.193,  $P < 0.05$ ) and 'conflict' (0.314,  $P < 0.005$ )<sup>83</sup>. Especially striking is that 'timeliness' as an item in the 'Newsworthiness' category, as the fourth factor identified by the factor analysis, has the smallest item loading on this factor showing that the 'goodness' of a news story is unlikely to be strongly associated with the freshness of the news.

In other studies the role of the newsworthiness values was found to be limited as a criterion on which the selection of news stories for the publication can be based. Gans (1980) argued that news values criteria are some rather loose and flexible considerations. Juicy details like 'hottest car' or 'tremendous' prices, or promotional practices and social relationships in a newspaper were found to be more important values for assigning a news story for the front page at editorial meetings than the classic newsworthiness criteria (Clayman & Reisner, 1998).

In this part of the research the role of the newsworthiness category is quite high as it appears to determine 13.3 percent of the input in the overall grade of the article. Interestingly, the low correlation coefficients that determine absence of the link of the ratings of most of the newsworthiness criteria to the overall-short grade or to the rating of the newsworthiness as a category cannot be explained by the too wide variance of the assigned ratings. The standard deviation of the newsworthiness criteria (from 0.694 to 0.984) was smaller than in the standard deviation of criteria in the other categories (from 0.879 to 1.462), which speaks for stronger agreement between the experts when they were judging the quality of articles against the specific descriptors within each criterion. But apparently the understanding of newsworthiness as a construct was different when it was judged as a holistic item. More research is needed to realise what exactly experts mean when they are considering whether a news story is newsworthy or not.

---

<sup>83</sup> The 'General interest' criterion was rejected because of its low discriminant validity.



Another interesting finding of this part of the research was that the structure of the news story appeared to be the next most important category after factual quality and credibility, coming up to 23.1 percent of the total grade and being much more important than ‘newsworthiness’. Together with the criteria that refer to accuracy and credibility of news texts, the structure elements became part of the first factor. This corresponds to research by Huot (1996) who found that assessment grades are most highly linked to organisation of the text and the noteworthy content.

#### 4.2.2. *Fine-tuning of the NTA*

As discussed in Chapter 3, ‘accuracy and credibility’ and ‘objectivity as a method’ are the core criteria of the NTA because of their importance to news writing practices (Brooks, et al., 1988; Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001; McLellan, 2001; Schudson, 2001; Tuchman, 1972). According to recommendations in literature on assessments the rubrics are supposed to give prominence to its important elements (Arter & McTighe, 2001) or, the opposite, poor performance can be given negative weightings to stimulate the learner’s attention to the poor levels of quality of their work (Patel & Russell, 2002). One system of assessment of quality of news writing was described in Chapter 1 (Speere, 2002). This system contained fines that punished such mistakes as wrong addresses or confusing its and it’s by assigning them the ‘F’ grade which equated to about minus 40 points.

But wrong addresses and confusing grammar constitute the ‘inappropriate’ level of quality in the NTA. More serious mistakes are addressed in the ‘unacceptable’ level, including plagiarism, fabrications, and propaganda, which were not taken into account in the Speere assessment format. How much should they be fined? My experience in conducting eight long-term online training programmes in six post-USSR countries suggests that the trainees are equally worried — or equally not worried — about different mistakes they make in news stories unless some pedagogical instrument is used to make them pay attention to the most important elements of news writing. In the first online training that I conducted in Belarus in 2000, no fines were used. And the trainees did not really worry about their inaccuracies or bias. In the second training small fines were introduced, but they did not have much effect. Only when the magnitude of fines was made twice the size of the best possible mark did the trainees start to worry about performances that led to such punishment (see more discussion about the use of negative ratings in sections 1.4.2 and 7.8).

Therefore, it was decided to create substantial fines for lower than ‘acceptable’ levels of performances in the two main elements of the NTA — ‘accuracy and credibility’ and ‘objectivity as a method’. No studies of the magnitude of possible fines for bad performance were found in available literature. Therefore, using my experience, recommendations in

literature to use negative ratings and the example by Speere as benchmarks, a fine of 33 points off the total grade were created for the ‘inappropriate’ level of quality and a fine of 67 points – off the grade for the ‘unacceptable’ level of quality, the logic being to equate two mistakes of this calibre to the ultimately best possible score in the NTA of 100 points.

Therefore, the amendments to the previous table were made:

**Table 18. Adding major fines to the NTA**

<i>Levels of quality/ Names of criteria</i>	<i>Unacceptable</i>	<i>Inappropriate</i>	<i>Acceptable</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Outstanding</i>
Accuracy and credibility	-67	-33	2.2	4.3	6.5
Objectivity as a method	-67	-33	3.2	6.3	9.5

In the further research the NTA was tested for its workability in two pilot experiments. The second one was combined with the creation of the SET. The choice of the Agency for the research is explained in Chapter 2. Eighteen staff reporters of the Agency participated in the pilot projects. For space reasons this part of the research is not represented in the thesis except a description of one major complication that had to be resolved during the first of the pilots.

When using the NTA in the first pilot experiment on news stories of journalists who reported mostly on various events and utterances, this being the main content of the local journalistic news culture, it appeared to be difficult to assess the quality of such an important criterion as using ‘objectivity as a method’. According to the NTA, if stories did not contain controversies, and did not contain problems that were listed in the quality levels lower than ‘good’, they had to be assessed as ‘good’. This means that objectivity as a method was used by the reporters if they fit the descriptions ‘information is presented in a neutral way; facts and opinions are separated.’

But this posed a problem. The journalists believed that presenting information without their opinions is sufficient for their news story to be assessed at the good level in this criterion and kept posting one-source and one-sided episodically-framed stories which had to be assessed at the ‘good’ level as if objectivity was used as a method. Of course, these stories received small fines for their low quality in other criteria, but that had a negligible effect on the total grade. Positive marks on the website seemed to cause satisfaction and no reason to worry even though the total grades were far from the target level of the ‘acceptable’ level of performance.

Despite the descriptions being formulated from deductions from the analysis of literature, the descriptions in the 'objectivity' criterion did not appear suited to assess the stories that the trainees were writing. Even though Mencher (1994) suggested in his textbook that fairness as one element of objectivity used as a method of testing information, is not a feature of all news story but only of stories that contain controversy, this suggestion was not helpful in spurring journalists to move on from their 'stenography' journalism. To do this, the mechanism of the application of the 'objectivity as a method' criterion to uncontroversial news had to be incorporated in the NTA. In practice, such a mechanism is used in the form of providing some context even for short news. In other words, by giving news in a larger picture it stops being one-sided and episodically-framed. Therefore, it was decided to change the alignment of the 'context' criterion with the 'explanations' criterion and instead to combine the 'context' with the 'objectivity as a method' criterion. This reconfiguration did not involve changing any ratings in the NTA created in this chapter as it was the correlation coefficient of the 'explanations' criterion that was used to create the weighting in the combined 'explanations'-'context' criterion. Such reconfiguration also suggested that more research may help to find even more appropriate combinations of different criteria.

The new combination was tested and because big fines were imposed for the lack of context, the journalists very quickly understood the significance of using contexts because they were fined for articles that framed news episodically.

## **Conclusions**

As a result of this analysis the first hypothesis of this research was supported. By applying correlation and complementary factor analysis to the results of testing of the 30-criteria scoring rubric developed with the help of literature analysis and the researcher's experience, a valid scoring rubric which can be consistently applied to assess news articles was created.

A method of weighting a scoring rubric to assess the quality of journalistic news articles was created using correlation and complementary factor analysis in which some of the 30 criteria of news writing selected and approved in the previous chapter were combined, some rejected, and some kept their original content.

An online NTA with 13 criteria was prepared as one version of an assessment tool to rate the quality of news articles. The criteria are: 'newsworthiness', 'accuracy and credibility', 'objectivity as a method', 'factual sufficiency', 'explanations', 'impact', 'practical use', 'journalist's voice', 'details', 'use of quotes', 'use of language', 'intro' and 'structure.'

Fines were set up to accentuate poor performances and stimulate the trainees' attention to the 'inappropriate' and 'unacceptable' levels of quality in the two core criteria of the NTA – 'accuracy and credibility' and 'objectivity as a method.' An 'inappropriate' level of performance was fined with 33 points off the total score, and an 'unacceptable' one — with 67 points off the total score.

The criterion 'objectivity as a method' was initially assigned in its own league as an individual criterion while many others were combined as a result of statistical analysis to shorten the NTA. However, it appeared to be not operational when tested in the pilot project if applied to non-controversial news because the descriptors 'information is presented in a neutral way; facts and opinions are separated' allowed episodically-framed stories to be assessed at the 'good' level.

After being aligned with the 'context' criterion, the criterion 'objectivity as a method' can be applied to non-controversial news and stimulate more important thematic framing.

In the next chapter the NTA was used as a basis to create an online textbook which was further tested for its workability in the experiment with working journalists in Azerbaijan.

## **Limitations**

The results of this part of the research have limitations regarding their application to assess the quality of news texts. Firstly, the results were obtained using a limited sample of data. For factor analysis, a ratio of about 5 to 10 subjects per item is recommended. In this research 30 items, or criteria, were examined, which means that at least 150 rows of data should have been submitted for the analysis. However, because of the difficulty finding highly qualified experts who were prepared to spend about two hours on average doing the assessments, only 112 rows of data obtained from 23 experts, were analysed. The experts were mainly based in New Zealand, where this researcher is based, and the United States, where this researcher attended a trainer's conference at the Poynter Institute of Media Studies. But then, the number of highly qualified experts who could be approached face-to-face or do assessments at the request of this researcher's supervisors was virtually exhausted.<sup>84</sup>

---

<sup>84</sup> None of the experts approached without previous face-to-face contact or contact by this researcher's supervisors agreed to participate in this research.

## **Chapter 5.      Creation of a virtual textbook based on a scoring rubric to use in training of news reporters**

### **Introduction**

Analysis of the pedagogical literature showed that reviewing and marking assignments in educational institutions is a time-consuming process (Brown & Knight, 1994; Case, 2007; Cooper, 2000; Heinrich & Lawn, 2004). Tutors often long for a large set of pretyped comments which could be attached to copy so that they do not have to repeat the same comments over and over again. The same applies to journalism training, especially if training includes unlearning previous writing habits and learning new standards and styles. This is the case in training journalists in transitional countries including post-USSR ones where journalists carry a wealth of habits and traditions which are partially inherited from the previous authoritarian regimes and still enforced by their seniors. Changing well ingrained faulty habits is harder to do than to teach journalism to novice students in western countries with rich journalism cultures and a society open to questioning the authorities.<sup>85</sup>

An e-textbook, which is the subject of this chapter, is a possible solution to help tackle repetitive problems rooted in previous habits. It comprises a large number of pretyped teaching materials that include instructions with typical mistakes and ways to correct them, examples, model stories and quizzes, which can be hyperlinked to news stories. The materials are easy to upgrade and the set of the materials can be enlarged indefinitely as long as the need to create a new set of teaching materials appears. All the teaching materials are hyperlinked to the NTA, which was described in Chapter 5. Such design allows for the combination of assessment and instruction and potentially could simplify and accelerate the work of instructors redirecting their energy into more challenging teaching than continuous repetitions and explanations.

The previous experience of this researcher in conducting long-term online training programmes in news writing shows that online training is a highly suitable setting that helps change the mindset of journalists and facilitate the shift to modern standards of journalism news writing.

Asynchronous e-learning has certain advantages as a form of workplace training not only over short seminars, but over any classroom setting, among which the biggest is that the

---

<sup>85</sup> For the analysis of why western news formats and styles are appropriate to be taught in developing and transitional countries see section 1.1.1

trainees do not need to take time off their usual work and move to another location to receive learning experience. Training in the workplace helps to immediately incorporate the new knowledge and skills into their work (Moore & Kearsley, 2005; J. Rugelj, 2001). The asynchronous mode of such learning means that journalists may make time for the training when it is convenient for them. Feedback on the stories, written as regular work assignments, can individualise training. Such training is also cost-effective as it does not need the physical presence of the trainer next to the trainees or even in the same country thus cutting a lot of overhead expenses on the training.

All these reasons make it possible to conduct a long-term distance learning programme in which the modern standards of reporting will not be only introduced, as workshops are only able to do, but trained by using various teaching instruments, until they are understood, digested, translated into the new skills and the old reporting habits unlearned.

Despite the obvious shift in the modern educational paradigm to using the Web, the apparent trends of moving workplace learning online and the lack of journalism training in developing countries which could change poor quality of news reporting to better standards, there are a lack of professional web-based courses and of instructional designs which could successfully address the core problems in the real situation of a busy editorial office and bring about the needed changes. As discussed in Chapter 1, while quite a few web-based resources are available to help in journalism training, no virtual books with built-in assessment and instructional modules specially designed for workplace training of news journalists have been found.

Such a book was created in this chapter and called a scoring e-textbook, or SET. The framework of cognitive load theory was employed to prepare the elements of the SET. According to this theory, the instructional materials should be sufficiently short to reduce the load on the working memory because of its limitations (Cooper, 1998; Merrienboer & Ayres, 2005). However, the volume of instructional materials that optimally matches the capacity of the human working memory is not specified in any research. Most researchers refer to the work by Miller (1956), who indicated that working memory can simultaneously deal with seven elements give or take two. The work by Simon (1974) is also frequently cited. He wrote that it can contain from five to seven chunks. What a 'chunk' is, however, depends on the expertise of an individual. The same material may be a number of interacting elements for one person and one element of a sophisticated schema for another person. For example, a 'chunk' may be a step in solving an equation (Sweller & Chandler, 1994). The authors further wrote: "What constitutes an element and which elements must interact when learning a task are entirely dependent on the schemas that have been acquired by learners" (p. 227). Simon (1974) referred to a study which demonstrated that while ordinary chess players can correctly

reproduce the position of about 6 figures on the board after an exposure of 5 to 10 seconds, grandmasters and masters can recall the position of about 20 to 25 figures. The next complication occurs when the working memory is not just holding, but has to process (organise, contrast, compare, analyse) information. Then, “humans are probably only able to deal with two or three items of information simultaneously” (Sweller, Merrienboer, & Paas, 1998, p. 252).

However, no research in social sciences, including in journalism teaching or training, provided any detailed discussion to help determine what a 'chunk' is in subjects which do not have formalised elements. Some research details the structure of digital textbooks and insists that the instructional texts in the virtual textbook should not be “just simply copied into selected format”, but broken down into smaller tasks, which the trainees would find easy to understand and digest, but should be “rather carefully structured” (J. Rugelj, 2001, p. 2). However, Rugelj does not specify the length of these instructional texts.

However, in the spirit of cognitive load theory it could be suggested that the size of one instructional element could be limited to one page. In practice of using learning objects (see more on learning objects in section 1.5) such a limit is appropriate, and even smaller educational chunks — down to notes the size of the screen of a mobile telephone — are recommended.

It was hypothesised that the SET based on microcontent and anchored in a scoring rubric as the base of instructional design could provide an efficient combination of formative feedback and assessment of news stories written by journalists during long-term workplace e-training and change the quality of their writing for the better. In the earlier stages of this research a weighted criterion-based scoring rubric, or NTA with 13 criteria was prepared (see Chapter 4). The criteria included: ‘newsworthiness’, ‘accuracy and credibility’, ‘objectivity as a method’, ‘factual sufficiency’, ‘explanations’, ‘impact’, ‘practical use’, ‘journalist’s independence’, ‘details’, ‘use of quotes’, ‘use of language’, ‘intro’, and ‘structure’.

This chapter will describe the design of the scoring e-rubric, or SET, and present several examples from it, but will not include the tool in its entirety because of its substantial length.

## **5.1. The organisation of the SET**

### *5.1.1. Coding system*

Each descriptor in the SET is given a three-digit code, the principle of which is described in Table 19. The first digit in the code represents the number of the criterion, the second — the level of quality and the third — the number of the descriptor within the level. For example,

the descriptor (411) means the number of the criterion ‘factual sufficiency’ in the rubric, which is No 4 out of 13 criteria, the No 1 level (‘unacceptable’) and the No 1 descriptor “Key facts or figures which could change the perception of the story are missing without explanation.” The descriptor (452) means the same criterion No 4, the No 5 level (‘outstanding’) and the No 2 descriptor ‘extraordinary anecdotes are given’.

**Table 19. The scheme of the NTA**

Numbers of criteria	Levels of quality				
	Unacceptable	Inappropriate	Acceptable	Good	Outstanding
0	1	2	3	4	5
Category 1					
1	Descriptor 111; descriptor 112; descriptor 113; etc	Descriptor 121; descriptor 122; descriptor 123; etc	Descriptor 131; descriptor 132; descriptor 133; etc	Descriptor 141; descriptor 142; descriptor 143; etc	Descriptor 151; descriptor 152; descriptor 153; etc
2, etc	Descriptor 211; descriptor 212; descriptor 213; etc	Descriptor 221; descriptor 222; descriptor 223; etc	Descriptor 231; descriptor 232; descriptor 233; etc	Descriptor 241; descriptor 242; descriptor 243; etc	Descriptor 251; descriptor 252; descriptor 253; etc
Category 2, etc					
3	Descriptor 311; descriptor 312; descriptor 313; etc	Descriptor 321; descriptor 322; descriptor 323; etc	Descriptor 331; descriptor 332; descriptor 333; etc	Descriptor 341; descriptor 342; descriptor 343; etc	Descriptor 351; descriptor 352; descriptor 353; etc
4, etc	Descriptor 411; descriptor 412; descriptor 413; etc	Descriptor 421; descriptor 422; descriptor 423; etc	Descriptor 431; descriptor 432; descriptor 433; etc	Descriptor 441; descriptor 442; descriptor 443; etc	Descriptor 451; descriptor 452; descriptor 453; etc

Figure 10 gives an example of how one criterion — ‘impact’ — is broken down in the NTA.



**Figure 10. Example of the representation <sup>a</sup> of the criterion 'impact' in the NTA <sup>b</sup>**

6.2 Impact of news on main stakeholder or stakeholders is not shown where necessary (621), while it is especially important for people (622); communities or society (623); budgets (624); organizations (625); businesses (626); entrepreneurs (627); industries (628); environment (629) or others (6210), or it is wrong (6211); or given where unnecessary or obvious (6212); or story has other shortcomings in representation of the impact and consequences of news (6213)	6.3 Descriptions in the 'good' level has minor deficiencies (631); including that coverage of impact is limited to only main stakeholder (632); and it is unclear what news means to others directly involved or affected (633); including people (634); communities (635); or society (636); budgets (637); organisations (638); businesses (639); entrepreneurs (6310); industries (6311); environment (6312); or others (6312), or impact is explained at length before the WWWWWH are covered (6313); or story has other minor weaknesses in representation of the impact and consequences of news (6314)	6.4 Story explains what news means to its direct stakeholders (641), including people (642); society (643); communities (644); budgets (645); organisations (646); businesses (647); entrepreneurs (648); industries (649); minorities (6410); environment (6411) other life forms (6412); or formations (6413); or on other relevant matters (6414); and issues (6415); or representation of the story's impact is 'good' otherwise (6416)
---	---	---

<sup>a</sup> For space reasons, only three levels of quality are provided. The other descriptors of the 'impact' criterion of the NTA are presented in Appendix 8.

<sup>b</sup> Levels of quality go from left to right as follows: 'inappropriate', 'acceptable', and 'good'

Source for this and all other figures in the chapter: Website of the online training tool (<http://nta.alterwebs.com/>). Access for authorised users only.

Some of the descriptors with the three-digit codes that come directly from the NTA are further broken down in the SET. This is the advantage provided by the online assessment setting. As pointed out when creating descriptors for the criteria in the NTA1 in Chapter 3 and appendices 4,6,7,8 and 9 they are rather generalised, some are holistic and thus implicit for spatial reasons containing qualifiers such as 'minor', 'inappropriate', 'appropriate', and 'relevant'. These can be used for assessment, but their use is limited when it comes to instructional purposes. It was suggested that if used for assessment purposes only, the choice of these descriptors is supported in a personal note by the instructor. The SET, which was developed to be used for both assessment and instructional purposes at the same time provides the opportunities for detailing many implicit messages except, of course, those that are peculiar only for the specific news texts. Detailing instruction is achieved by further coding of teaching materials that may include a variety of different formats. The length of most teaching materials in the SET was restricted to one page. Not only the analysis of literature suggests that such materials may be chunked down to the mobile phone-sized materials, but the previous experience of this researcher in online training shows that it is unrealistic to expect professional journalists who are busy with their daily routines to read — and digest — long instructional materials. Nor can they be expected to spend a long time on studies after hours.

To explicate the implicit messages in the NTA and provide instruction by using small chunks of teaching materials, further granularisation of the teaching materials was necessary. To do

this, the three-digit codes in the NTA were made the parental level of coding, and an extended coding system was set up for the creating of subclasses of teaching materials.

The first subclass that represents the varieties of problems contained in the generalised descriptor was coded by a letter of the Latin alphabet. For example, the descriptor (411) ‘key facts or figures are missing without explanation of the reason’ has four subclasses: a, b, c and d, and other subclasses can be added if necessary:

The descriptor (411a) contains explanations regarding the absence of the substantiation of the intro in the text of a news story;

- (411b) — the absence of the answer to the ‘when’ question without explaining the reason;
- (411c) — for the absence of the answer to the ‘where’ question without explaining the reason;
- (411d) — for the absence of main costs where necessary;
- (411e) — for using commentary instead of evidence.

The next coding subclass is represented by a digit to label the type of the teaching material. Digit 1 codes the core material, and the other digits (2, 3 and so on) code examples and other types of teaching materials. For example:

- (411a1) contains explanations of what the absence of the substantiation of the intro means;
- (411a2) contains examples of texts with the substantiation missing;
- (411a3) contains comparison of news with the substantiation missing and news written properly.

The list can be extended if necessary. Some other files contain advice and recommendations of the trainer, of experienced journalists, online resources, check-lists and questions for self-reflection.

The next symbol in the code is again a letter of the Latin alphabet and can be used to provide more extensive instructional materials on the subjects that appear to be especially difficult for the students. For instance:

- (411a1a), (411a1b), (411a1c) may contain additional teaching material on the substantiation of the intro in news stories
- (411a2a) may have more examples of texts with the missing substantiation if necessary

One example of an instructional file translated into English for demonstration purposes is given in Figure 11. Every file contained the problem, examples, explanations and better examples. Using example-problem pairs in instruction is highly recommended because such combinations result in self-explanations (Renkl & Atkinson, 2002; Sweller, et al., 1998). All the content of the SET was localised for the Azerbaijan-based journalists by using local examples. There are two reasons for using local examples despite the fact that localisation limits wider use of the instructional files to train journalists in other countries. First, analysis

of available reviews on textbooks written for journalists in specific countries mentioned the locality of the content as the advantage of these textbooks (Thomas, 2001). Secondly, hardly any textbook written in the United States, Britain or New Zealand would contain examples from, say, Fiji or Russia. The experience of this researcher who conducted online training in 6 different post-USSR countries and who is also author of a textbook *Let us Build a Pyramid of News* issued in Kyrgyzstan for Kyrgyz news reporters, also shows that local examples are engaging and help journalists to understand issues more deeply.

**Figure 11. Example of the instructional material in the module coded 1323b1:  
Paragraph unnecessarily begins with reference to a source**

**Paragraph unnecessarily begins with reference to a source** (edit)

1323b1 Readers should always know the source of information, but this does not mean every sentence or a paragraph has to start with reference to a source.

Your job is to write an interesting and engaging story and not just put blocks of texts with what someone said. **Reference is a technical matter, it indicates only where the information comes from and it must not dominate the narrative.**

Starting paragraphs with a source may be unavoidable when you introduce a new source.

If the source has been already introduced, move the reference to the middle of a longer paragraph, or to the end of a short sentence, or a paragraph of an average length.

Remember, that the beginning of each paragraph is psychologically the strongest place in it. The reader's attention then falls away, and that is where you put your reference.

**BAD EXAMPLE**

**The real estate association said** that it is owners of apartments that are sold on the secondary market who are raising prices on their apartments, saying the quality of old apartment blocks is much better than the quality of those newly constructed, and that therefore they must fetch a higher price.

The association has been introduced previously in the text, so the reference could be moved to the end of this sentence, or into the middle of it:

**EXAMPLE WITH THE REFERENCE IN THE MIDDLE:**

It is owners of apartments that are sold on the secondary market who are raising prices on their apartments, **said a source in the real estate association, adding** that the owners justify the higher prices by saying the old apartment blocks' quality is better than that of newly constructed ones.

**EXAMPLE WITH THE REFERENCE AT THE END:**

Owners of apartments sold on the secondary market are raising prices on their apartments saying that the quality of old apartment blocks is much better than the quality of the newly constructed ones, and thus must be more expensive, **a source in the real estate association said.**

**OTHER MATERIALS YOU MAY WANT TO READ:**

- (241a2) Ways to attribute to a source
- (241a2c) How to attribute attributions
- (241a3) When you don't have to attribute
- (233a1c) How to refer to anonymous sources
- (233a2) Examples of references to anonymous sources
- (233a1c1) How to refer to sources in press-services which do not allow to name their spokespersons

These six levels of coding provide an opportunity to create an extensive framework for learning. Coding can be also extended further if necessary (for example, see the code 233a1c1 used in Figure 11) Placement of teaching materials online allows the instructor to quickly

update them when necessary supplying fresh examples and explanations, including from the process of training.

#### *5.1.2. Hyperlinks in instructional texts*

Hyperlinks allow further material to be drawn into the text in ways that do not confuse or slow down readers. A typical example of an instructional text with hyperlinks is presented in Table 20.

**Table 20. Example of an instructional material with hyperlinks in its body**

<p><b>Intro is not straightforward</b> (edit)</p> <p>1215c1 Intro in breaking news story must be as direct and straightforward as possible.</p> <p>It should not be about news. It should itself be news.</p> <p><b>Intro in such stories should not raise brows. Just the opposite, It must answer the most important questions, including who, what has happened, where and when.</b></p> <p><b>If you can answer the questions why and how in a few words, and if this information is very important to a specific story, you can add this to the intro, too.</b></p> <p><b>But most importantly, find the most interesting, the most important, the newest material.</b></p> <p>Imagine you have just 5 seconds to say this news to a friend who is leaving on a train. Try to say a gist of it in a few words - just the most important, new, interesting, unusual.</p> <p><b>BAD EXAMPLE:</b>  To settle the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict there needs to be some sort of the process of peace settlement, reminiscent of the one used in the Northern Ireland, Charles Blandy, expert from the UK-based Conflict Studies Research Centre, announced yesterday in London at an international conference Prospects for Peace in Nagorno-Karabakh, organised by a coalition Consortium of initiative</p> <p><b>"It is very important, that the angry generation of people is gone. That is how it worked in the Northern Ireland," – he said.</b></p> <p>Isn't the most unusual and shocking message in the beginning of the story in saying that the conflict will not be resolved until people who are emotional about it die? It is so shocking, that I would suggest you check your tape! But if it is true, then put it in the intro!</p> <p><b>CONSIDER THIS VERSION:</b></p> <p><b>Peace in Nagorno-Karabakh — Azerbaijan district occupied by neighboring Armenia — will be possible only after a generation of angry people dies out, said a British expert in conflict studies Charles Blandy</b></p> <p><u><b>This intro is shocking, unusual and will attract readers to read into the story. But make sure he indeed said and meant this.</b></u></p> <p>You can use the day and the event at which this was said later in the story.</p> <p>Check for the other ways of writing shocking intros here (1252).</p> <p>One popular way of being elusive is starting news from the past, or give some introductory material. Don't do it. News does not have to start from the creation of the Universe or the era of dinosaurs as in the story about the increase in the number of wolves in a province of Uzbekistan, which you can read here (1313a2).</p> <p><b>VERY IMPORTANT: don't forget, that you will need to substantiate your intro in the story with relevant details, so don't use something in the intro you cannot prove and back up.</b></p> <p><b>READ GOOD EXAMPLES AND LEARNING MATERIALS</b></p> <p>(1241) Standard intros are used correctly</p>
--

Source: Website of the online training tool (<http://nta.alterwebs.com/>). Access for authorised users only.

Two hyperlinks are used in this text in the 5<sup>th</sup> and the 9<sup>th</sup> lines from the bottom of the text.

The purpose of the hyperlinks between the instruction materials was to stimulate trainees' interest in other issues and to encourage them to use materials for self-instruction. Some

hyperlinks were used to connect the possibly difficult or unknown elements of the texts to the files which contained explanations. Some authors of virtual textbooks suggest using hyperlinks to external materials as an additional resource which makes use of the resources posted on the Internet and moves learners beyond content mastery to acquire more complex skills. These skills include information-seeking, problem solving, grasping multiple and diverse perspectives and are enriched with multimedia (Ince, 2004; Liaw, 2000; Joze Rugelj, 2000). Several hyperlinks to external learning resources were used in the SET, mostly links to chapters of the Russian-language version of David Randall's textbook, *Universal Journalist*, which is available online.

Hyperlinks also served an important purpose of fighting the split-attention effect, a notion of cognitive load theory, which happens when learners have to unnecessarily divide their attention and become distracted from the main instructional material by making additional efforts to search for explanations of what they find difficult to understand. This effect also occurs when different elements that make sense when presented next to each other — for instance, text and graphics — are presented in different places of the instruction (Chandler & Sweller, 1992).

Overall, over 700 teaching modules were prepared for the online training, all of which contained instructional materials, hyperlinks, and examples, and about 80 of which contained exercises.

### *5.1.3. Placement of the codes in news texts*

For both instructional and assessment purposes the codes are inserted in the relevant places of news texts next to the particular deficiency they address. An example of such a text is provided in Figure 12. The material used in actual teaching is not reproduced here as it is in Russian. Instead, for demonstration purposes, a short text downloaded from a New Zealand publication is used to illustrate the marking process.

**Figure 12. Example of coding a news text**

Storm force winds thrash Canterbury  
Storm force winds thrash Canterbury :: News  
Writing – Distance training course

THIS IS AN IMPORTANT BREAKING NEWS STORY AND MANY READERS WILL BE INTERESTED.

IN SUCH A SHORT SPACE YOU MANAGED TO ADD SOME INTERESTING DETAILS ABOUT HOW IT HAPPENED THAT CAN PROVIDE SOME IDEAS FOR THOSE WHO ARE SUPPOSED TO LOOK AFTER THE TREES NEAR THE POWER LINES.

HOWEVER, THE CLAIM IN THE INTRO ABOUT THE THOUSANDS OF HOMES AFFECTED BY THE STORM HAS NOT BEEN PROVEN

Storm-force winds gusting up to 148km per hour caused chaos across Canterbury this morning, cutting power to **thousands of homes** and lifting roofs.

Power company Orion New Zealand operations manager Stuart Kilduff said they had received about **50 call-outs** to power cuts across the region, most of them caused by trees being blown across power lines. IF THERE WERE ONLY 50 CALL-OUTS, HOW CAN YOU TALK ABOUT CUTTING POWER TO THOUSANDS OF HOMES IN THE INTRO? THESE FACTS CONTRADICT EACH OTHER (227)

(1323b1)He said most of the outages lasted about two hours and the main areas affected were Darfield (221b1)DARFIELD IS ONE WORD, Annat and Brookside (411a1).

A fire service spokesman said they had been called out for lifted roofs in Lincoln, Oxford, Akaroa and Westport.

The worst incident was in Le Bons Bay where a house **lost quarter** (1127d1) of its roof and a shed being built on the property was destroyed.

(1323b1)Metservice forecaster Janet Syme said Le Bons Bay bore the brunt of the winds with a mean speed of 56 knots (104km) MUST BE PER HOUR (1113d1), which meant gusts of up to 80 knots (148km) (1113d1).

THIS STORY CAN GIVE MORE CONTEXT (331) – IS IT THE WORST ONE EVER? IS THERE ANYTHING UNIQUE ABOUT IT OR IS IT THE 50TH OF THIS KIND IN THE LAST MONTH ONLY?

Text in Figure 12 illustrates that marking with the help of SET consists of several personal notes, inserts of codes in the text, and several emphasised chunks of the original text in bold. Personal notes are very important at the top of the text pointing out the strengths of the story and giving encouragement. The first personal note also addresses the major deficiency of the story. Two other personal notes specify codes that may sound implicit. For instance, code 227 stands for the ‘text contains exaggerations’ and the personal note points out the specific exaggeration. The last personal note adds further ideas for the journalist to think about and includes the relevant code. All the codes in the text can be used in two ways. When the marked text is read for the first time, pointing at the code by a cursor allows the trainee to



read the name of the descriptor (which is also the name of the teaching file). Such reading provides the overall impression of the quality of the text and gives trainees some idea of the work that will have to be done by them before submission of the next text<sup>86</sup> (see next section of this chapter for further detail on this).

#### 5.1.4. Assessment

The trainees also receive an assessment of their news story. An example of such assessment is given on Figure 13. Here the story about the storm in Canterbury is assessed.

**Figure 13. Example of assessment by SET as seen by the trainee**

Newsworthiness	151	13.30	Accuracy	227	-33.00
Objectivity as a method	331	3.20	Factual sufficiency	411a1	-2.60
Explanations	531	2.30	Impact, consequences	631	2.60
Journalist's voice	841	3.00	Details and colour	932	1.30
Use of language	1113d1	-1.30	Intro	1242	8.00
Structure	1323b1	0.00			
Total: -3.20					

The picture shows the names of criteria and the codes of the descriptors used in the marking, which are clickable in case journalists would like to read the explanations immediately. Assessment scores (in grey colour on the right of the codes) are also given.<sup>87</sup> For assessment purposes only the lowest-scored performances were used despite the fact that in different places of the text other levels of performances in the same criteria may have been marked because it is the usual practice of marking using scoring rubrics or performance assessment formats (Arter & McTighe, 2001; Bernardin & Beatty, 1984). An example of how the scoring was conducted is presented in Figure 13. It can be seen that this version contains all the codes inserted by the instructor in the text while the trainee's version shows only the lowest-scored. However, it makes little difference to training as all the codes can be used directly from the

<sup>86</sup> In the experiment in which SET was tested, new texts written by trainees as part of their working assignments were submitted for marking every two weeks

<sup>87</sup> The score -33 for the 227 descriptor in the 'accuracy' criterion is explained in section 4.2.2, more discussion about negative ratings see in chapter 7

text, and they are also accumulated in the personal profile of the trainees. From their profiles journalists can see how many times the same descriptor was used to mark their work and adjust their attention and training accordingly. The codes in the central column are used for assessment and instruction, while the codes in the right column are used for instruction only. In the author's use of the SET, some journalists had many codes that were marked for instruction purposes only. Note that while the codes used in the central and the right columns of the 'accuracy' and the 'structure' criteria belong to the same level of quality — 'inappropriate', the codes in the 'use of language' criterion belong to two different gradations of quality — 'unacceptable' (central column) and 'inappropriate' (right column). The lowest was always used for assessment purposes.

**Figure 14. Example of assessment by SET as made by the instructor**

1. Newsworthiness	151	
2. Accuracy	227	221b1
3. Objectivity as a method	331	
4. Factual sufficiency	411a1	
5. Explanations	531	
6. Impact, consequences	631	
7. Practical use		
8. Journalist's voice	841	
9. Details and colour	932	
10. Use of quotes		
11. Use of language	1113d1	1127d1
12. Intro	1242	
13. Structure	1323b1	1322

### 5.1.5. *Self-training assisted by SET*

After the assessment and the marked copy has been received and understood,<sup>88</sup> the main self-training work starts. This work is designed to be distributed by the trainees equally within the two weeks between the successive submissions so that they are doing some self-training work every day. Self-training consists of reading, doing exercises, solving quizzes, reading additional materials, rewriting chunks of own stories, in which mistakes were made, and communicating with the instructor on difficult issues.

#### **5.1.5.1. Reading**

To self-train, journalists click the code and the relevant instructional material opens next to the text. An example of such design is represented on Figure 15. Teaching material can also be opened as a separate file if the trainee clicks the name of the file. As can be seen from the right column, some teaching materials contain hyperlinks to other materials in the texts (see code 241d1 that explains the definition of the journalistic truth), and journalists can self-study relevant issues as well as the issues pointed out for them by the instructor in the marked text.

---

<sup>88</sup> If the trainees had questions they could immediately approach the trainer by ICQ, email or through the training website

Figure 15. Example of the training design

<p>Storm force winds thrash Canterbury</p> <p>NOTE FROM THE INSTRUCTOR: THIS IS AN IMPORTANT BREAKING NEWS STORY AND MANY READERS WILL BE INTERESTED.</p> <p>IN SUCH A SHORT SPACE YOU MANAGED TO ADD SOME INTERESTING DETAILS ABOUT HOW IT HAPPENED THAT CAN PROVIDE SOME IDEAS FOR THOSE WHO ARE SUPPOSED TO LOOK AFTER THE TREES NEAR THE POWER LINES.</p> <p>HOWEVER, THE CLAIM IN THE INTRO ABOUT THE THOUSANDS OF HOMES AFFECTED BY THE STORM HAS NOT BEEN PROVEN</p> <p>Storm-force winds gusting up to 148km per hour caused chaos across Canterbury this morning, cutting power to <b>thousands of homes</b> and lifting roofs.</p> <p>Power company Orion New Zealand operations manager Stuart Kilduff said they had received about <b>50 call-outs</b> to power cuts across the region, most of them caused by trees being blown across power lines. IF THERE WERE ONLY 50 CALL-OUTS, HOW CAN YOU TALK ABOUT CUTTING POWER TO THOUSANDS OF HOMES IN THE INTRO? THESE FACTS CONTRADICT EACH OTHER (227)</p> <p>(1323b1)He said most of the outages lasted about two hours and the main areas affected were Dar field (221b1)DARFIELD IS ONE WORD, Annat and Brookside (411a1).</p> <p>A fire service spokesman said they had been called out for lifted roofs in Lincoln, Oxford, Akaroa and Westport .</p>	<p><b>227: Text contains exaggerations</b></p> <p>227 Every word in your text must be as close to the journalistic truth (241d1)as possible.</p> <p>You should not exaggerate, which often happens when you generalise, use non-specific words or do not back up claims, including from sources, with sufficient details and justification</p> <p><b>BAD EXAMPLE:</b> <b>ARMENIAN MILITARY DESTROYS HISTORICAL MONUMENTS</b></p> <p>A historical monument, a burial hill, located in the Borsunly village of Terter district of Azerbaijan was completely destroyed as a result of shooting by Armenian troops.</p> <p>Destroying monuments is indeed bad. But is this news really about monuments or about one particular monument? Compare the headline and the intro. Is the claim in the headline supported in the intro? The text that followed, which is omitted here, also did not contain anything that would prove that it is "monuments" that have been destroyed.</p> <p>Such generalisations should not be in a news story.</p> <p><b>HOW TO FIX IT:</b> <b>The headline should have reflected the news. Just say what has happened:</b></p> <p><b>ARMENIAN TROOPS DESTROY HISTORICAL BURIAL HILL IN TERTER DISTRICT</b></p>
--	--

### 5.1.6. *Interactivity*

Assessment opportunities, explanatory materials linked to descriptors in the NTA and additional hyperlinks to other teaching materials constitute only a part of the instructional potential of the SET. There are two other parts of the training module that jointly comprise the training experiences that the SET can provide: interactive activities and communication with the instructor.

Interactive activities are mostly represented by exercises and quizzes. Some of the teaching materials have quizzes which are self-contained because not only is the correct answer supplied, but the explanations on every wrong answer are also supplied. If the trainees have questions or disagree with the correct answer, they can contact the instructor with a question. The pilot experiment, however, showed that the interest of the trainees in quizzes was low and therefore more effort was put into preparing interactive exercises in which journalists had to put more effort than just to choose one of the ready-made answers.

Many teaching materials are supplied with at least one interactive exercise, while the most complicated materials have several sets of exercises. Each exercise consists of two parts. The first part is the easiest and includes only one task. The task must not only be fulfilled, the trainees should also explain they fulfilled the task the way they did, and, if applicable, provide alternative ways. Then, the reply is submitted and can be compared with the correct answer. At this stage any misunderstanding of the task is usually dealt with. The trainee then proceeds to do several more tasks. After completion and explanation of the reasons for why the task was performed in the way it was performed, it is submitted and compared with the correct answers. Then, the trainee is required to address her or his own mistakes, as coded in the marked copy. The chunk of the news story with the mistake should be rewritten in the correct way and submitted to the relevant window on the website. Next, the trainee is required to draw conclusions from the exercise and point out what changes to his or her own routines he or she will make to avoid repeating the same mistake. An example of one exercise is presented on Figure 16.

**Figure 16. Example of an interactive exercise**

Rewrite the texts below paying attention to the placement of the attribution.

Explain any changes you make.

After you finish the exercise rewrite the chunk of your news story, to which this remark with the code of the learning material was given.

At the end of the exercise make a conclusion and ask a question, if any.

TEXT FOR THE EXERCISE

If any technical problems occur during the registration of a presidential candidate for the election this year in Azerbaijan, the candidate will have to pay a deposit of USD 33,000 to the election commission to get registered. This was told to the Agency by the secretary of the Central Election Commission Natig Mamedov.

The secretary of the Central Election Commission declared that the deposit would be required only if technical problems occur, such as mistakes in the lists of signatures collected in support of the candidate.

Mamedov said that the deposit will be paid back only if the candidate gets over 3 percent of the total vote during the election. Otherwise, the deposit will be transferred to the state budget.

Expert Sabit Bagirov considers the deposit too high compared with the minimum wage in Azerbaijan.

"This means that many worthy people, who do not possess substantial finances cannot become candidates," he said.

The trainee is also required to give feedback on the teaching file and the exercise advising the instructor on the level of complexity and quality of their content and whether anything should be changed. Lastly, the trainees can choose whether they would like to ask the instructor questions on the individual forum between the trainee and the instructor or post an issue for discussion for the attention of all the participants of the training.

#### *5.1.7. Instructional supervision*

Meanwhile, the trainees' conclusions on exercises, feedback on the quality of the learning modules, and questions are automatically sent by the website to the instructor's email for checking. The instructors can accordingly adjust elements of the learning modules, answer questions or initiate their own correspondence if the trainee's work shows that the material has not been understood.

## Conclusions

The SET, or scoring e-textbook, consists of training modules, or sets of teaching, self-learning and interactive materials which elaborate on various elements of news writing. Every set is attached to the related descriptor in the scoring rubric NTA, or the news texts assessment system.

Training modules are mostly self-contained. Intervention by the instructor is needed at two stages: first, to assess and code news stories, and, second, to react if a trainee shows misunderstanding of the materials, or asks questions.

A system of coding was prepared to facilitate assessment and to organise training modules. It consists of a combination of Latin letters and digits beyond the three-digital codes used in the NTA. The first digit in the NTA code stands for the number of the criterion (from 1 to 13), the second digit — for the quality level (from 1, or ‘unacceptable’ to 5, or ‘outstanding’), the third digit is the number of the descriptor in each level of quality.

It was hoped that this instructional design would provide extensive learning experiences to journalism trainees and at the same time enable the instructor not only to combine assessment with feedback and instruction, but also to avoid the tedious work of having to repeat the same comments, something labelled by many instructors as tedious and laborious.

While the thesis has established academic and journalistic rationales for this set of tools, refined them through testing and gathered them together into an easy-to-use format, it has not yet established empirically the value of these tools for online training. Finding out the extent to which these tools affect the quality of news writing is the target of the next chapter.

## Chapter 6. Results of the experiment

### Introduction

This chapter aimed to test the second of two hypotheses of this study formulated in Chapter 1: that the scoring e-textbook, or SET, based on microcontent and linked to the NTA could serve as the basis of instructional design for online training of reporters in news writing providing an efficient combination of formative feedback, opportunity for self-regulated learning and assessment of news stories written by journalists during long-term workplace online training. It was hoped that the application of the SET and the NTA would be able to improve the quality of their news writing.

The content and the mechanisms of creation of the NTA and the SET teaching tools were described in Chapters 2, 4 and 5, and the content of online training in which these two tools were used as main teaching instruments was also described in Chapter 5.

The chapter consists of several parts: in the first part the work done by the trainees and the results of the experiment are described. The relevance, as perceived by the trainees, of news writing elements that served as the basis for the NTA for writing news in Azerbaijan is then presented, and the assessment of the elements of the SET, NTA and other elements of the online training follow. The chapter finishes with an assessment of satisfaction with the online training, and the trainer's conclusion regarding timing issues during the training. In appendices 13-18 several original transcripts of synchronous conversations between the instructor and the trainees are given along with samples of the assessment portfolio of some trainees.

Eight newly hired staff writers of one Azerbaijan news agency<sup>89</sup> with little or no experience in journalism or news writing started their participation in the online training based on SET early in September 2008 and finished late in December 2008. All the reporters were based in Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, while this researcher was based in Christchurch, New Zealand. No face-to-face contact has ever been made between the two sides in the online training.

The target of the training was specified as the need to achieve the level of 33 points for a news story during training because this level matches the 'acceptable' level of the elements in the NTA, as discussed in Chapters 3 and 4. However, achieving stable performance was not expected because journalism news writing is a complex performance, and, as the theory on cognitive learning and teaching suggests, practice is needed to transfer knowledge and to

---

<sup>89</sup> The reason the name of the agency is not given is explained in chapter 2, as well as the reason for not revealing the names of the trainees. The agency will be further referred to as an Agency



automate complex skills (Ferguson & DeFelice, 2010; R Mayer & M Wittrock, 1996; Szulanski, 2000).

## 6.1. Work done by the trainees during the online training

The journalists were told that the online training differed from the usual education setting mainly because the amount of work they put into it and their results would be their own responsibility and initiative, and they should take charge of the training. They were told that the trainer, beyond marking and assessing their stories once every two weeks, was mainly a consultant who would help and assist them when needed.

### 6.1.1. Statistics on the work done during the training

No limit was put on the amount of training work and communication with the trainer during the training period, and journalists were encouraged to post not only their mandatory minimum of one story a fortnight for marking and assessment, but more stories if they wanted to. Some journalists used the opportunities well. For instance, Ellie was the ‘champion’ of communication and the amount of work done during the online training. She posted 111 stories, including 8 mandatory stories and 103 she wanted advice on for some specific issues, most of which were small. At the other end was Narmina who posted only 7 stories and decided to stop training before the training period was over. Statistics on the important parts of the online training are presented in Table 21 and juxtaposed to the achievements of each trainee. Average statistics for the top five participants who achieved the training target of 33 points for a story are contrasted with the statistics of those who did not achieve the target. The trainees are listed in order of their achievements (specified in the 6th column).

**Table 21. Statistics on different kinds of work during the training**

<i>Name of the trainee</i>	<i>Number of posted stories</i>	<i>Number of fulfilled exercises</i>	<i>Number of questions asked via the training website</i>	<i>Numbers of contacts through ICQ</i>	<i>Best scores for stories filed for the training</i>
1	2	3	4	5	6
Helen	14	52	40	44	45.7
Ellie	111	76	55	54	38.9
Dina	22	76	42	35	37.6
Edgar	38	14	-	16	37.5
Vicky	53	37	31	35	36.6

<b>Average<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>47.6</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>36.8</b>	<b>39.3</b>
Norma	8	11	9	4	31.2
Richard	19	22	6	18	13.1
Julia	43	82	31	28	5.3
<b>Average<sup>b</sup></b>	<b>23.3</b>	<b>38.3</b>	<b>15.3</b>	<b>16.6</b>	<b>16.5</b>

*Notes*

<sup>a</sup> Average for the five reporters who achieved the training target of 33 points for a story

<sup>b</sup> Average for the three reporters who did not achieve the target.

Because of the small number of trainees, no statistical analysis other than computing of the simple mean made sense, therefore only trends could be discussed. The trend is clear: the reporters who achieved the target posted more stories for marking, fulfilled more exercises, asked almost three times more questions via the website, and used ICQ for communication with the instructor twice as often.

### *6.1.2. Changes in the level of news writing competencies*

The NTA was used to pretest the journalists' news writing skills to establish the baseline of their competencies, and as a tool to monitor their performance during the online training. Not only was the trainer able to monitor their performance on the training website, but the journalists were also encouraged to monitor their own progress and to analyse the changes in the levels of their competencies during training. Desk editors also oversaw the changes. The change in the level of news writing competencies was judged by the degree to which news stories assessments conducted with the help of the NTA changed as a result of the experiment. As mentioned above, the target level of the training was to achieve a score for a news story close to 33 points, which matches the 'acceptable' level of quality.

While for the sake of this research the scores in the NTA which were created as a result of its scaling with the help of correlation and factor analysis (see Chapter 4) are used, for pedagogical reasons four special big fines were introduced to assess stories during the training<sup>90</sup>. Stories with poor levels of quality in the 'accuracy and credibility' and 'objectivity as a method' criteria were fined 33 points ('inappropriate' level) and 67 points ('unacceptable' level). The fines acted as psychological pressure to keep the trainees paying attention to fixing the most important elements. In Table 22 both kinds of results — with fines and without fines — are represented.

---

<sup>90</sup> For justification of these fines see section 4.2.2 and discussion in chapter 7

**Table 22. The results of the experiment**

Names of the trainees	Baseline assessment	Number of the story							
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Dina	3.4 <sup>a</sup>	17	11	3.2	1.3	14.2	10.4	<b>37.6</b> <sup>g</sup>	16.5
	-29.6 <sup>b</sup>	-16	-55	-29.8	-31.7	-18.8	-22.6		-16.5
Edgar <sup>c</sup>	9.2	12.7	3.3	22.4	12.3	17.8	14.6	<b>37.5</b>	-
	-55.5		-61.5			-46			
Ellie	-13.8	-5.9	18.9	37.1	39.6	24	17.5	<b>38.9</b>	23.1
	-110.6	-71.9	-14.1			-9	-15.5		-9.9
Helen	4.7	6.1	5	2.3	34.2	33.6	<b>45.7</b>	33.3	24
	-28.3	-26.9	-61	-30.7	-10.9				
Julia	-17.3	-14.5	-6.6	<b>5.3</b>	-10.9	1.3	-5	1.5	-3.4
	-115.1	-79.3	-39.6	-60.7	-43.9	-96.5	-71	-31.5	-36.4
Norma <sup>d</sup>	-8.4	1.4	25.9	-20.4	<b>31.2</b>	-0.2	13.3	-12.8	-
	-106.1	-96.4	-7.1	-118.2		-65	-84.5	-76.6	
Richard <sup>e</sup>	-10.7	-4.1	1.7	<b>13.1</b>	7.5	-9.6	8.6	-13.3	-
	-75.4	-101.8	-31.3	-52.9	-58.5	-42.5	-24.4	-110.1	
Vicky	11.7	8	14.3	21.6	25.6	20.6	<b>36.6</b>	28.9	26
	-54.3	-58	-18.7	-11.4	-7.4			-4.1	-7
<b>Average<sup>f</sup></b>	<b>-2.65</b>	<b>2.59</b>	<b>9.19</b>	<b>10.58</b>	<b>17.6</b>	<b>12.71</b>	<b>17.71</b>	<b>18.95</b>	<b>17.24</b>

*Notes*

<sup>a</sup> The figure in the first row contains score for each story without big fines.

<sup>b</sup> The figure in the second row contains score for each story including any big fines.

<sup>c</sup> Edgar stopped participating in the training because he was covering a business event in Baku and later decided he had got all he wanted from the training.

<sup>d</sup> Norma started online training two weeks later than the others, but decided to complete the training with the rest of the training group but did not file a story for the last assessment.

<sup>e</sup> Richard was fired by the agency for his low production rates and poor quality of work. Incidentally, he was fired before posting his last story for the training and he also did not complete the questionnaire at the end of the training. So his comments regarding the training could not be analysed in this chapter. However, his achievements were taken into account and are considered to be part of the experiment results.

<sup>f</sup> Average is given only for the scores without big fines.

<sup>g</sup> Bold is used to emphasise the best results of each trainee during the training

Six out of 8 reporters, or 75 percent of the trainees, achieved the target level of 33 points or came close to it with 31.2 points (Norma). It can be seen that despite reporters on average

progressing every week except the fifth (in which the setback cannot be explained by the researcher), for some their scores peaked in the early stages. For instance, Richard's relatively high score for his third story can be explained by the high newsworthiness of the story. It was written about the OSCE's opinion of the presidential elections in Azerbaijan, and if he had not gained the 13.3 points for the 'outstanding' level of newsworthiness of this story he might not have achieved such a peak. Julia was another reporter who did not achieve substantial progress and apparently needed a longer period of training. Norma, who had no journalistic experience before she started the training and who did not complete the training, also needed more time training.

### 6.1.3. *Frequently repeated mistakes and ways to deal with them*

Five of the most common and repetitive problems in news writing that were marked in the trainees' stories are presented in Table 23.

**Table 23. Top five repetitive mistakes**

Codes	Names of the descriptor/teaching module	Numbers of repetitions of each mistake							
		Helen	Ellie	Norma	Dina	Edgar	Richard	Julia	Vicky
1123	Non-specific words are used	9	3	3	7	6		11	6
1121a1a	Value-laden adjectives and adverbs are used outside a quote	7	4	4	14		4		5
331h1a	Explanatory context is missing to clarify details in the text	5			8		4	6	
211a1	Impossible to judge the accuracy of information because it is not attributed to a source		5	5		6			
1121a1	Unnecessary words are used				8		4		6
1113d1	Writing is unclear	6						7	
1121a2	'At present', 'currently' or other unnecessary words are used		3	3					
124	Importance of the news is not formulated where necessary					6	3 <sup>a</sup>		
1115	Serious grammar or stylistic mistakes or other serious problems of the		4	4					

	language								
1324a1	Logical links are absent, or technical transitions are used	6							
1113c1	Story contains faulty logic				10				
1026b1	Quotes are attributed to a group of people					5			
1022	Facts are quoted which should be written in indirect speech					5			
1111a1	Officialese is used						4		
222	Facts contradict each other							7	
123	The problem in which news unfolds is unclear								6
1324	Narrative loses focus								6

*Note*

<sup>a</sup> See Appendix 15 for the ICQ discussion with Richard about formulating the key context which would specify why the story was written. This conversation also shows that it takes time for some trainees to realise the importance of training.

The table illustrates that the most common problems are in the use of language. The use of non-specific words was common. A few examples of this mistake (in italics):

Dina: ‘The USA are *active* (1123) in resolving the conflict between Pakistan and India after the attack in Mumbai.’

Instead of the verb ‘active’, Dina should have explained what exactly the USA is doing in the region.

Ellie: ‘Azeri politologist Tofic Abbasov says that the cause of the split between [Armenian president Serge] Sargsyan and the [Armenian] diaspora was a *clear* (1123) split of opinions on *so-called basic* (1123) problems.’

It is impossible to say what this sentence means, and no explanations followed in the text.

The second most frequent mistake was using value-laden adjectives and adverbs outside a quote. A few examples of this mistake (in italics):

Ellie: ‘If Armenia does not revive its transport links with Turkey, Yerevan may not have other opportunities to link itself to the outside world because it has *lame* (1121a1a) transport communications, said Zhirikhin.’

Dina: ‘A White House spokesman said Monday that the IAEA report *clearly* (1121a1a) noted that Iran again declined to cooperate.’

Norma: ‘Due to the *high* (1121a1a) image of the bank, the volume of its capital is constantly growing.’

The next most frequent mistake was lack of explanations in the texts that made it hard to make sense of the story. An example of this mistake is in a story about the banning of broadcasts by the BBC and the Voice of America in Azerbaijan at the end of 2008:

Richard: “‘Unfortunately, some organisations are politicising the decision of the [Azerbaijan national broadcasting] council concerning the ban on broadcasting by foreign media. This decision is *legally sound* (331h1a),” said Magerramly, head of the council.’

Richard should have explained what ‘legally sound’ means because logically, if it was legally sound, then the broadcasters must have been operating illegally in Azerbaijan up until the present. To illustrate how extensive problems with the language used in news stories were, Ellie’s assessment portfolio is represented in Appendix 10. To compare, see also the portfolios of Helen in Appendix 12 and Julia in Appendix 13.

Several possible explanations for difficulties in achieving good results are the cognitive difficulty of developing complex news writing skills, lack of time for the training because of the busy working day, and insufficient length of the training. The first issue is discussed in Chapter 7, while the others are addressed further in this chapter.

The most common mistakes have little to do with complexity of the elements of news writing as the trainees assessed it (Table 24).

**Table 24. Trainees’ perceptions of the complexity of the news writing criteria**

Criteria	Complexity <sup>a</sup>	Average, Mean-Max
Comprehensiveness	4,5,4,3,5,5,3 <sup>b</sup>	4.14, 3-5
Objectivity as a method	3,4,5,1,4,5,3	3.57, 1-5
Newsworthiness	3,2,4,2,5,4,4	3.43, 2-5
Structure	2,5,5,3,3,2,3	3.29, 2-5
Practical use	5,3,3,1,4,3,4	3.29, 1-5
Reporter’s voice	4,2,4,4,3,3,3	3.29, 2-4
Use of language	3,3,5,3,2,3,3	3.14, 2-5
Intro	2,5,4,2,2,4,2	3.00, 2-5
Accuracy and credibility	3,2,5,3,1,2,4	2.86, 1-5
Explanations	2,2,3,2,3,1,3	2.29, 1-3

Impact	3,2,3,1,2,4,2	2.43, 1-4
Details	1,3,3,1,2,1,3	2.00, 1-3
Use of quotes	1,3,3,1,1,1,2	1.71, 1-3
Attribution <sup>c</sup>	1,2,3,1,1,1,2	1.57, 1-3

#### Notes

<sup>a</sup> The scores are listed in the following order: Helen, Norma, Dina, Julia, Vicky, Edgar, Ellie

<sup>b</sup> Scale is 5-point, in which 1 is the easiest and 5 is the most complicated

<sup>c</sup> ‘Attribution’ was not a separate criterion but part of ‘accuracy’, but it was listed separately in this table because the trainees made many mistakes in attribution and it was expedient to find out whether it was too complicated.

As the data in the table show, according to the trainees’ assessment, the hardest element for three reporters and second hardest for two was ‘comprehensiveness’ which received the highest average score for its complexity. However, as can be seen from the comparison of data in Tables 23 and 24, the problems with ‘comprehensiveness’ are not part of the five most repeated problems according to statistics from the training website. The second most complex element, as assessed by reporters, was ‘objectivity as a method’ (Table 24), while Table 23 shows that the top two most frequent mistakes were in the use of language. And the use of language — as Table 23 shows — was rated by the reporters as having a medium level of difficulty. However, the position of the next several elements — ‘objectivity’, ‘newsworthiness’, and ‘structure’ — are at the top of the list of difficult elements. When the trainees’ mention of ‘structure’ as being difficult element is taken into account, this suggests these elements deserve more attention during online training.

Reporters considered the last three elements in the table — ‘details’, ‘use of quotes’, and ‘attribution’ — the latter incidentally being the fourth most typically repeated mistake as shown in Table 23 — to be comparatively easy. It is likely that the trainees made a lot of mistakes in attribution only because they considered it so easy that they paid little attention to it. This should be taken into account during training.

#### 6.1.4. Frequently repeated mistakes

Answers by the trainees on the reasons for not fixing frequently repeated mistakes suggest that only after they see the repetition of the same mistake in different contexts in different stories can they start consciously noticing them and addressing them (Table 29). However, various reasons for repeating the same mistakes were mentioned by different trainees. Helen, for instance, wrote that she “honestly” thought about her mistakes, but they kept cropping up, some referred to the seriousness of mistakes, for instance, incorrect structure or wrong intro (Norma), Dina admitted she was not attentive enough, especially in the mechanics of writing. Julia referred to the great number of details that were supposed to be attended to, Vicky and

Edgar wrote that they found it difficult to transfer what they learned to other contexts and Vicky suggested that more exercises needed to be prepared.

To help the trainees cope with the most stubborn mistakes, several ways were used and only a few of them could be utilised by the trainer. I prepared additional exercises and encouraged reporters to do them, reminded them about the numbers of repetitions in successive marked copies<sup>91</sup>, and talked to them about paying attention to some specific issues. But they needed to do the rest of the work. Some ways of dealing with mistakes were specified in the introduction to the training on the front page of the website. Apart from re-reading instructional materials, the trainees were advised to keep a diary in which they were supposed to record repeated mistakes and conclusions after completing training modules in the SET. It was also recommended that they read the diary every day and think about the application of their own conclusions to the stories they wrote during the day (see opinions by the trainees about keeping the diary in Table 43. Thirdly, they were provided with some checklists, and advised to create their own.

An example of what journalists could do about the deficiencies of their writing is analysed further. For instance, Julia had 23 deficiencies of the ‘unacceptable’ and ‘inappropriate’ levels marked in her copy of Nov. 6, 2008:

**Figure 17. List of Julia’s mistakes in her 5<sup>th</sup> story filed for the training**

-96.50	8.9	-67	-33	-2.6	2.3	1.5	-1.3	0	-1.3	-4	0
	141	211a1	324a1	412	531	832	911b1	1021b1	1115	1215c1	1323f1
		223	331h1a						1121a1a		1323g1
		226							1127c1c		1323b1a
		221b1							1121a1		1323b1
		224b1							1123		
									1124a1		
									1113d1		
									1113c1		

These deficiencies are of different kinds. Some demand deep involvement and analysis, some only need attention, repetition, and checking before submitting. Some checklists with general problems were provided to journalists, including a checklist with ‘forbidden words and phrases’ that contained a list of the most popular officialese and unnecessary words. But some journalists had specific problems and needed to create their own lists. Suggestions regarding what Julia should have done as part of her self-training are listed in Table 30. Eight mistakes included in the first group are conceptual, such as lack of substantiation of news and editorialising in news texts, and Julia needed to fully process learning materials in order to understand the underlying notions in order to prevent such mistakes in her next copies. Journalists were advised to use their new knowledge in other stories they wrote, look for similar instances in news they read and analyse how they were used.

<sup>91</sup> Despite the trainees having access to this information in their profiles



Eight mistakes, made in the mechanics of news writing in violation of the Agency's style guide — such as 'information is not attributed to a source' or 'unnecessary beginning of a paragraph with an attribution', needed to be put into the 'mechanics of news writing' personal checklist and pinned on the wall in front of the reporter to be used on a daily basis.

Seven mistakes, included in the third group, occurred because of the poor language command, including 'non-specific words are used' and 'unnecessary words are used'. After processing, these mistakes should have been put in the personal 'language checklist' and used as part of the writing routine until the rule is memorised.

Some mistakes are apparently more persistent than the others. It should be noted that the nature of other journalists' repetitive mistakes differed and the SET allowed their specific problems to be addressed as necessary rather than teaching all the journalists the same information in a traditional face-to-face linear fashion when they do not even know how closely particular deficiencies are relevant to them.

Communication by ICQ was also helpful to tackle some problems. One example of a typical ICQ communication between Julia and the instructor is given in Appendix 14. The communication included talking about keeping a diary. To be polite, ICQ communication being one of the closest forms to the face-to-face conversation as it gets in cyberspace, always started with something general, including a short talk about house pets, health or weather, and then proceeded to discussions on various urgent or difficult issues, or procedural training issues. For instance, in this conversation — as I did not have the opportunity to check whether the trainees had kept diaries — I tried to convince Julia that the diary would be beneficial for her as it would help her remember what she had learned.

## **6.2. Relevance of writing news according to western standards to Azerbaijan news journalism**

As discussed in Chapter 1, despite the possibility of national journalisms having substantial differences, news writing standards in many countries with different political systems are similar and the application of western standards is deemed appropriate in transitional and developing countries. Therefore, two questions about the perceived relevance of western news writing standards to Azerbaijan were included in the final questionnaire. All the journalists answered 'yes' to the first question ("Do you think that news writing criteria taught in this training are fully applicable in Azerbaijan and are suitable for your work? Please explain your answer"), but none elaborated on why they thought so. During the training, none of the trainees ever argued about the application of the western standards and values, or expressed doubt in the examples or instructional materials, making it clear that they

accepted the western news style. In a message to the instructor after the training Ellie wrote: “I understood a very important thing, about what journalism is for – you don’t only need to write something, but you should write what is important and credible, and objectivity is the most important element of journalism. We must take into account every side of every issue.”

From the answer to the second question (“Do you think these criteria are alien for journalism in Azerbaijan? Please explain your answer”) it is clear that western news writing criteria are not practised in Azerbaijan, especially such core criteria as fairness and accuracy. Journalists were divided in their opinions about the need to practise these values in their country. While all but one wrote that despite these values not being used, they are important and applicable. However Dina wrote that “people here don’t need fair and accurate news” and “do not appreciate in-depth stories” being content with the propaganda-type journalism practised in the local media. The answers suggest that news journalism in the country operates at the level which Lee & Solomon (1990) called ‘stenography’ journalism. Indeed, googling for news from Azerbaijan mostly bring reports about utterances or official declarations by officials and politicians or spot news.

There is a pressing need, then, for the introduction of better standards if changes in the quality of journalism are to take place. It is noteworthy that none of the journalists said that because of journalism traditions in the country they did not need to implement better standards of reporting. This suggests that they understood the advantages of their newly acquired skills.

### **6.3. The trainees’ assessment of the online training elements**

This section is mainly based on the trainees’ reaction to the training expressed in their answers to 30 questions in a questionnaire.

Because the number of trainees was fairly small, with only 7 trainees filling in the questionnaire, it was inexpedient to apply statistics to the opinions of the graduates. However, the range of the answers provides a multi-faceted picture of individual attitudes that helps to understand the complex picture of learning experiences that the trainees went through during the 4 months of online training. The graduates of the training were asked not only to answer the questions, but also to explain their answers and to suggest how future trainings could be improved.

**Table 25. Assessment of the elements of the SET and other elements of online training**

<i>Assessment of the quality of the elements of the online training</i>	<i>Helen</i>	<i>Norma</i>	<i>Dina</i>	<i>Julia</i>	<i>Vicky</i>	<i>Edgar</i>	<i>Ellie</i>	<i>Average</i>
Marked stories	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Monitoring own results	5	- <sup>a</sup>	5	5	5	5	5	5
Communication with the trainer	5	-	5	-	5	5	5	5
Exercises	5	-	5	5	4	3	5	4.66
Reading colleagues' stories	-	4	5	-	5	5	4	4.6
Examples	5	5	4	5	5	3	5	4.57
Learning materials	5	4	4	5	5	3	5	4.43
Quizzes	5	-	2	5	3	4	3	4.4
Rewriting own text with mistakes	4	-	5	5	4	-	3	4.2
Hyperlinks	4	5	4	3	5	3	3	3.86
NTA	5	-	4	-	5	1	4	3.8

*Note*

<sup>a</sup> Some trainees did not assess one or several elements of training. In private conversations trainees said they did not feel qualified enough to grade their quality

The most popular elements were the opportunity to monitor changes in their own achievements and marked stories, followed by exercises, reading colleagues' marked stories and examples. Trainees rated hyperlinks and the NTA lowest. Tables that follow in this subsection give some insights into the attitudes of the trainees to these elements.

### *6.3.1. Examples*

The examples used in the learning texts, exercises, and quizzes were mainly built on local incidents. However, most examples of contexts were taken from western publications because such examples did not exist in Azeri journalism. Journalists labelled the examples “just amazing” (Helen), “very helpful” or “helpful” (Norma, Julia, Ellie and Dina), “convenient” (Vicky), and “the most interesting in learning materials” (Edgar) (Table 32). Helen appreciated humour and vividness of the examples writing “I remember that when I was

reading examples from the file on *officialese*<sup>92</sup> I was killing myself laughing, I even read it to my mother and we had a good long laugh together”. Most trainees wrote that the examples helped to understand their mistakes. The trainees recommended adding more examples to the learning materials.

### 6.3.2. Exercises

Most journalists rated the quality of exercises as excellent, while one trainee gave it four points, one (Edgar) gave it three points and one (Norma) did not rate them. As seen in the Table 33, journalists, who achieved the target of the training, did an average of 51 exercises, while two journalists who did not achieve the target self-trained much less: only 11 exercises (Norma) and 22 exercises (Richard). Journalists wrote that exercises are “clear, explicit, without extra information, and to the point” (Julia), “make you think actively” (Helen), help “to understand what is required from me” (Julia), and are “very useful” (Ellie). As a problem, Vicky mentioned that some exercises needed specific knowledge in order to understand and fulfil them<sup>93</sup>. These exercises were modified as soon as the feedback was obtained.

The analysis of Edgar’s and Norma’s fulfilment of the exercises and his reaction to these exercises cannot explain his low assessment of the quality of exercises<sup>94</sup> and absence of comment by Norma.

Edgar, who fulfilled 14 exercises, left only one opinion about them. He assessed the complexity of the second exercise on the formulation of the ‘importance’ block as ‘normal’, and commented: “these tasks are easy, but when you start writing, it gets a bit complicated to understand what relates to what. But I should say that it has got easier now.” Norma wrote about assessing the quality of the exercise on serious mistakes in language, essentially repeating Edgar’s sentiment: ‘when you read it everything seems as simple as it gets, but it is much more difficult to stick to it when you write your own story’. She assessed the complexity of this exercise as ‘normal’. She repeated nearly the same for the ‘story has no news’ exercise: ‘I need to analyse this material more, because when I read everything seems clear, but then I keep making the same mistakes.’ She assessed the complexity as ‘normal’

---

<sup>92</sup> One example from this file was a quote by one Azeri opposition politician who complains to the Azeri Prosecutor General that the authorities refuse to issue him a foreign passport, which he needed to speak at a meeting of the European Parliament in Strasbourg. To justify the refusal, authorities referred to a criminal case initiated against him 15 years ago in which he was never charged. Instead of simply saying the essence of what going on, the quote was used in full: 'Mentioned above artificial obstacles on the way of obtaining my passport are prohibiting me from the participation in this event. I hope that the unlawful attitude to me stops and you will not allow the appending of even more negative nuances to the image of our state.'

<sup>93</sup> This explanation is confusing because Vicky has a university degree in foreign economic relations

<sup>94</sup> As noted in chapter 5, after fulfilment of every exercise the trainees were required to assess its complexity, draw conclusions, recommend changes if any and ask questions

and, as the page statistics show, opened the same page 8 times. The comment on the exercise ‘serious problems in the headline’ reads: “I assessed this exercise as ‘hard’ only because it was difficult for me in this specific news to find any newsworthiness in it, the news appeared to be somehow empty”. She referred to her story with the headline ‘The share of monopolies on the Azerbaijan’s market has not changed yet’. My comment was that this headline could be written every day until the share changes, and therefore contains no news. Norma also assessed the complexity of two exercises as ‘normal’: one exercise on how to attribute quotations, and another on how to provide geographical context.

### 6.3.3. *Hyperlinks*

Hyperlinks, or codes in the texts of instructional modules, appeared to be a controversial issue. Some trainees used them without problems, writing that they are “very convenient, and allow deeper learning of topics” (Vicky) and they “helped to find new exercises” (Dina). But most noted them as unnecessarily complicating the learning process. As shown in Table 34, two trainees — Ellie and Edgar — even downgraded the quality of the instructional materials because of the hyperlinks. “Just looking at the hyperlinks, and then hyperlinks within the hyperlinked materials, I lost the desire to read anything”, wrote Edgar. Ellie considered hyperlinks complicating her learning saying: “When I am trying to fix my chunk of text with the specific mistake, I have to click on codes and read other materials. So I am not sorting out my problem but read a lot of learning materials”. Julia wrote that because of hyperlinks in learning modules, she sometimes forgot where she started.

In an ironic twist, the hyperlinks were created for exactly the opposite reason — which was appreciated by three other trainees — to enrich the materials. However, this problem is rather technical than pedagogical, and it is easy to fix by correcting the instructional design. For instance, by making some specific words clickable rather than keeping codes in the text that apparently disturb some trainees. However, such a remedy is symptomatic rather than conceptual: apparently novice journalists with little knowledge of the basics of news reporting have to do a lot of additional learning to understand their immediate problem pointed out by the instructor. Such additional learning apparently makes their work on a specific mistake rather long. However, without the knowledge of relevant concepts and notions, there is little chance that trainees will be able to digest the knowledge needed to fix their mistake.

### 6.3.4. *Instructional materials*

Four trainees gave the instructional texts the highest marks, two graded them as ‘4’. Helen explained: “I did not need to look for anything myself. You just open and read ... It is a good system, nothing needs to be changed”.

One trainee (Edgar) rated the instructional materials as '3' because of the abundance of hyperlinks in them. Edgar also mentioned an excessive amount of explanations in the texts of learning materials. The texts were specifically prepared to be short, and most of them are only one page long. To get additional explanations, the trainees had to click relevant codes at the bottom of the instructional texts.

Dina wrote that some instructional materials were unclear until she got down to do exercises. As the opinions of the trainees about the quality and the complexity of instructional modules were part of every instructional file, these materials were amended in case some substantiated criticism or suggestions were proposed.

#### *6.3.5. Rewriting a piece of text in own stories*

Two trainees rated this part of self-training as '5', two as '4', one as '3' and two did not rate it (Table 36). Edgar suggested that instead of rewriting chunks in old stories, it is better to "aim not to make the same mistakes in news stories". However, Dina wrote that rewriting her own text was "important so that you don't repeat the same mistake". Julia noted that it helps to "clearly see your mistakes" and Helen, who neglected it in the beginning of training, wrote: "I was lazy to come back to what I have already written before, and to rewrite it. But later, I got used to it. Actually, it is very useful when you rewrite your own text and not someone else's. For some reason, it is more difficult. When it is your own text, you think 'I have already written it as well as I could'. But after some thinking, a better option can be always found."

The trainees were free to neglect or accept any part of the training, so their preferences for some elements and neglecting of others depended not only on their being busy with the main working assignments, but, possibly, depended on their experiences and habits, or learning styles (Kolb, 1976), which are relevant to online training as well as to face-to-face learning experiences (Burdick, 2010; Peters, 2007).

Ellie, for instance, rewrote some of the chunks in her stories with mistakes reluctantly at the beginning of the training, then stopped doing it and instead put a lot of effort into other parts of the training, including doing exercises and filing extra stories for consultations. Vicky suggested that some mistakes refer to the wrong focus or structure of the text and that they need to be rewritten as a whole, which is too time-consuming. Ellie found her way of dealing with this issue: she twice made a request for the instructor to rewrite her stories to show how they might have been written better and in accordance with the news criteria and standards. Despite it being demanding on the instructor's time, I considered it a valid request because of the obvious interest Ellie showed in training, and rewrote her stories. Ellie agreed with the new versions and said it was a helpful insight.

#### 6.3.6. *Quizzes*

Two journalists rated the quality of quizzes at '5', one at '4', two at '3', one at '2' and one did not rate them (

Table 37). Edgar wrote that they are “interesting”, Helen – that solving quizzes was “convenient”. Julia preferred quizzes to exercises providing a contestable reasoning<sup>95</sup>: “finding the correct answer shows the ability of a journalist to transfer new knowledge into practice”. Two trainees who gave quizzes low marks explained that their rating was low because there were not enough of them. Dina, who rated the quizzes at ‘2’, wrote that “perhaps a test of 10 questions would have been even better. Just one question after reading a learning material seems insufficient”. Indeed, this part of the instructional module needs major improvement.

#### 6.3.7. *Using the NTA to assess the quality of stories*

Apparently the NTA was the most controversial element of the online training. Two trainees assessed it (see Table 38) at the highest level, writing that assessments are “important” (Vicky), and that “marks are showing you the level you are on” and that it was “very convenient that one can see what the marks consisted of” (Helen). Assessing it at the level of ‘4’, Dina protested against the use of big fines for the ‘unacceptable’ and ‘inappropriate’ levels of performance in the ‘accuracy’ and ‘objectivity’ criteria: “you work so hard to get information, and then for the absence of ‘said in a telephone interview’ are fined by minus 33 points<sup>96</sup>. Edgar was even more straightforward calling it “the most hated element of the training” and “the sword of Damocles”, which did not allow him to feel comfortable at the training. In private conversations during the training, I advised Edgar to turn off the assessment option so that he did not see it, but he refused (likewise, Dina refused to turn off the assessment option). Judging by the fact that Edgar asked me several times to give him access to the other trainees’ assessments<sup>97</sup>, he was more interested in comparing his progress with the progress by his colleagues than to see how he was positioned against the target of the training to achieve the ‘acceptable’ level of the quality of his writing, unlike Helen, who suggested it was important to see the “level you are on”.

Therefore, two possible reasons for the “hatred” to the NTA were identified: harsh fines made trainees feel uncomfortable (Edgar, Dina), and not taking into account the time spent on writing stories (Ellie). However, when assessment was considered as the way to measure their progress, the attitude to assessment changed (Table 39).

---

<sup>95</sup> Julia solved all the quizzes, but at the same time her number of repetitions of the same mistakes was one of the highest among the training participants

<sup>96</sup> See the discussion about the need to clarify the circumstances in which information was obtained in section 3.3.5

<sup>97</sup> The trainees could access only their marks if desired, but not other trainees’ marks. The latter was made possible only for their editors so that they were able to monitor the progress of their journalists



#### 6.3.8. *Tracking their progress*

All but one trainee who did not answer this question gave the highest mark to the opportunity to track their progress, including Edgar who hated assessment, as it was shown in Table 38. The trainees (see Table 39). called it “very important” (Dina, Vicky) and “very positive” (Helen). Some mentioned the opportunity to “see a trend” in own achievements (Dina, Edgar, Ellie). As Helen put it: “It is very important to see whether you are improving, going down, or staying the same”. She wrote: “I was glad to see that my grades are getting better with every story. In the middle of the training I had a failure to minus 60, and I was upset but then I got above zero and my grades went steadily up.” Monitoring their progress was the second most popular element of online training after the marked stories.

#### 6.3.1. *Reading marked stories*

Apparently reading the marked stories was the most popular and the most important element of online training, in the trainees’ views because all the trainees assessed it at the highest level (Table 40). Journalists noted the “constructive criticism from a competent person”, the opportunity to see “suggested versions of text” that helped to “see a better version” (Helen), the clarity of the trainer’s remarks (Norma, Dina), “everything in them” (Vicky). Julia said that it would have been “impossible to train without the marked copies”. However, Edgar, who also assessed the marked stories at the level of ‘5’, wrote that he “did not always understand what the trainer wanted” from him, adding that the disadvantage of the online training setting is that “not everything that is written is understandable.” Edgar, however, did not ask for clarification of everything that he did not understand, and in many cases, when I saw he had repeated mistakes I made approaches through the forum of the training website, ICQ, or email suggesting these elements be discussed.<sup>98</sup> Often, he said he was too busy to do it.

Lack of time is one important reason that journalists do not fulfil all the tasks of the training and are not prepared to discuss all the issues that they find difficult. Allocating them special time for training may be helpful if the media outlet wants to achieve the targets of training.

---

<sup>98</sup> Adding Skype to be used with headphones to the online instruments is apparently an option to meet in the proxy-real-life environment to discuss difficult issues. However, the Agency had Skype installed only on one computer which was used only for interviews with foreign sources. In addition, the journalists were not using ICQ as part of their daily working routine and this program was installed in their computers only on my request. Out of my conversations with the management it was clear that the management did not trust that the reporters will not use ICQ and Skype for private purposes thus taking time off their work and spending the Agency’s budget, so access to these tools were put under control. Limiting access to such programs is the case in many other cash-strapped media in developing and transitional countries.

### 6.3.2. *Reading other journalists' marked stories*

Reading colleagues' marked stories was not used by everyone on a regular basis, but it was an uncontroversial element of the training. Three trainees assessed it at '5' level, two at '4' level, and two did not assess this part of the training because they read only a few stories (

Table 41). Ellie considered it “one more kind of practice.” Vicky explained her reasoning for reading others’ stories by the need to learn from her colleagues’ mistakes: “[S]ometimes we don’t make mistakes because we haven’t encountered some specific situations. And reading someone else’s marked stories you can learn of other people’s mistakes, without having to make your own”. She added she wished more time was allocated for the training. Dina added that reading colleagues’ stories helped her “very much, sometimes even more than reading my own marked stories”. In the conversations during the training she was saying that it was easier for her to see mistakes in other journalists’ stories than in her own.

### *Summary*

Provided special time is allocated for the training, there is a chance that this element of training would have been used more often providing more insights into the nature of mistakes and the ways to prevent them.

#### *6.3.1. The completeness of the use of the SET*

Only two trainees (Julia and Ellie) wrote that they did all the self-training work that was due (Table 42). Helen, Vicky, Edgar, and Norma wrote that they did not read some of the learning materials and did not do all the exercises. Dina did not read all the learning materials, but concentrated on doing exercises sometimes specially searching for them on the website<sup>99</sup>. The answers show that the trainees had the intention of fully fulfilling the training work, but did not do it sometimes because of the lack of time or an urgent work assignment.

## **6.4. Opinions about the usefulness of other components of the online training**

#### *6.4.1. Training diary*

Two trainees assessed the usefulness of keeping a diary at ‘5’, two – at ‘4’, one – at ‘3’ and one at ‘1’ (Table 43). One of the trainees, Julia, did not start a diary. As an advantage of this part of training Dina wrote that “after you write there something that you **MUST NOT DO**<sup>100</sup>, you really stop doing it very soon”. Helen wrote that the diary helped her to follow the progress in the change of her professional thinking. Norma went back to the diary when she forgot something. Edgar quickly realised that he remembers his mistakes without the diary

---

<sup>99</sup> Ellie also told me that she was searching for the exercises she had not done on the website and suggested that I post new exercises

<sup>100</sup> Emphasis in the original

and stopped keeping it soon after the beginning of the training. Julia, who several times told me in our ICQ communications, that she will start keeping it, never started<sup>101</sup>.

Vicky suggested that the diary would be kept on the condition that it is obligatory and checked regularly. Indeed, keeping a diary was an optional element of the training, like all the others, and the online instructor indeed had no capacity to check if the diaries were kept. The Agency's editor agreed to check the diaries, but it never occurred.

#### *6.4.2. Contest for the best story*

Three journalists assessed this part of the training at '5', one at '4', one at '3' and one at '1' (Table 44). Helen, who won the contest, did not assess its quality. Despite Norma and Dina writing that the stories were assessed "objectively" at the contest, other journalists had several major concerns about it. Ellie suggested that the time spent on writing a story for the contest should be included in the assessment criteria, Vicky and Edgar wrote that the assessment criteria should be different for the training and the contest, including that the stories should have higher marks if their impact is high (Vicky), and that various news story formats should be assessed in different categories of entries (Edgar)

While none of the existing marking criteria take into account the time spent writing a news story, it is clear that Vicky's and Edgar's suggestion are reasonable and that the impact of the story should be considered, and separate categories should be created for news, business news and news analysis. Indeed, a more complex assessment is also needed which would include not only assessment by means of the NTA but, perhaps, creating a panel of editors from the Agency and, in the best scenario, even some external markers.

#### *6.4.3. Quality of communication with the instructor*

Five journalists assessed the quality of communication at '5', while two did not give a rating, answering only the second part of the question about which mode of communication they appreciated better<sup>102</sup> (Table 45). Those who appreciated communication highly, wrote that they often "had plenty of questions" and needed the opportunity to have them answered (Helen).

Journalists apparently preferred quick online communication via ICQ because it was "effective", "live" and allowed "everything to be speeded up" (Edgar), "convenient" (Helen

---

<sup>101</sup> See conversation with Julia regarding keeping diary in Appendix 14

<sup>102</sup> As described in section 2.4.2, the trainees were free to choose any communication channel that suited them: email, ICQ, or forums on the training website that had options to discuss issues by all the trainees or, privately, communicate on a particular issue between the trainee and the trainer. The latter option was attached to the training modules so that the trainees could ask questions just as they self-trained

and Vicky), “of course useful” (Ellie), “the easiest” (Julia), “faster” (Norma), “the best for communication” and a “must for online training” (Dina). Vicky wrote: “One reason is that none of us know you [trainer] personally, and more or less personal contact is possible only in online communication. You can’t write as much otherwise. I did not get engaged by the training before I started to communicate by ICQ. Also, while talking by ICQ, I had a lot of new ideas. Such training is impossible without the ICQ.” Two examples of ICQ communication are presented in Appendix 14 (with Julia) and Appendix 15 (with Richard).

However, two trainees confined most or all their communication to the forum at the training website. Helen explained that ICQ was “time consuming” because when such communication is available, one always wants to ask something” (Helen). Norma did not give the reason for her preference, but during my communication with her during the training I understood that she was too busy to be able to concentrate on live chat as she was trying to learn all journalism basics on the job at the same time as doing the job<sup>103</sup>.

Helen suggested that communication through the website prevented her from talking “about everything”, as is the case of life communication using the ICQ. She wrote: “the most convenient was communication through the website, because I got replies quickly and the timeliness of communication is not suffering.” Interestingly, none of the journalists used email for communication, the main reason being its unreliability. The Internet network in Azerbaijan is not well-developed and many messages are not delivered.

## 6.5. Timing of different tasks during the training

Lack of time was given as the explanation of much under-achievement in the training.

Answers to time-related issues were grouped together in this section.

### 6.5.1. *Time spent on reading marked stories*

Journalists were instructed to first read the whole marked copy and understand the deficiencies that were attached to various mistakes by codes by pointing at the code with the cursor, which made the name of the mistake appear. They were then advised to work on each mistake separately and allow themselves time to digest the material by not processing a lot of learning materials in one go. The trainees spent from 10 to 40 minutes on the initial reading with from 20 to 30 minutes being the most typical time (**Error! Reference source not found.**). After the initial reading, they returned to the marked copies as they processed learning materials, worked on exercises, corrected mistakes in their own texts and communicated with the instructor about unclear issues. Some journalists mentioned that they

---

<sup>103</sup> Norma had no experience in journalism when she was hired and immediately started training online.

read the marked stories several times (Ellie, Helen, Dina), and Helen said that after spending initial “about 10 minutes” on the first reading with the “focus on the most interesting points”, she read them at home “more attentively.”

#### *6.5.2. Time spent on reading one learning material*

Journalists spent from 15 to 60 minutes on reading one learning material text, with 20 to 30 minutes being the most popular time (Table 47). The time depended on the complexity and the length of the material, and also on the additional reading (in the hyperlinked files) the trainees sometimes had to do. Most learning texts were kept to only up to one page long, but some had an option of a more extensive explanatory reading from the file which was listed at the bottom of the text. Helen noted that she read complicated learning materials several times for “deep understanding.”

#### *6.5.3. Time spent on doing one exercise*

Journalists spent from 20 minutes to 90 minutes on doing exercises depending on their complexity and the level of involvement, with 20 to 30 minutes being the most typical time (Table 48). More time was spent on exercises that “involved explanations, comments etc. (Julia), on complicated exercises “especially on structuring” (Vicky), on texts that needed to be rewritten completely, or something had to be added, or an additional search was required” (Helen). Helen added that spending more time on exercises depended on her nature: “If I don’t have a clear deadline, I take longer than other people.”<sup>104</sup>

Compared to the time spent on reading the learning materials (20 to 30 minutes) and on the marked copy (10 to 40 minutes), 20 to 90 minutes are likely to constitute a relatively significant learning experience. Judging by the number of codes pointing at the specific deficiencies in news writing, attached to each marked copy — sometimes more than a dozen — the training process was extremely demanding on the trainees’ time. For instance, if the average investment of time is taken into account for a story with, say, 10 codes attached, the training experienced demanded about 25x10 minutes on exercises, 25x10 minutes on reading the materials, and 25 minutes on reading the marked copy, if only one-off reading is considered. Therefore, the whole learning experience on average comes up to 525 minutes, which is nearly 10 hours to be spent on processing of one average story. This amount of time does not include reading hyperlinked materials. This means that with the exception of two weekend days, journalists needed to spend at least one hour a day on the training. Such an expenditure of time does not seem to be too demanding on work time and the management of

---

<sup>104</sup> There was a tension in the Agency regarding Helen’s relative slowness that also affected her production rate. However, she was ultimately allowed to spend more time on her stories by the management, because they were meticulously thorough and in-depth.

the media organisation can be expected to make this time for training. It can also be expected that if at least one hour is provided to journalists by the management, they can make additional time for training out of their personal time — as the reporters did during this training. However, spending ten hours processing mistakes on only one story is a long time. The trainees gave an averaged perception of their timing. Presumably, they spent less time as the training went on because they had to read some materials for the second and third time. However, other mistakes appeared, so it is probably expedient to require one hour a day as a rule-of-thumb approximation of the time needed to devote to training.

Sometimes journalists asked to extend their deadline for submitting the next article because of too much work, assignments out of Baku, or too many deficiencies identified in marked stories, and they were always allowed to do so.

#### *6.5.4. What journalists want additional time for during the training*

Four of the seven journalists suggested adding interactivity to the training, including providing more exercises (Dina, Julia, Ellie), and discussion in the forum following the “imitation of some situations” (Edgar) (Table 49). This is worth considering when designing such training. Norma and Vicky mentioned structure-related issues, including finding focus and more training in structuring news. This should also be considered by increasing the number of relevant exercises and examples, and preparing special series of forum discussions on focus and structure in which different formats should be discussed. Dina noted that the training should be longer than 4 months, but this issue is outside the trainer’s control.

## **6.6. Assessment of the achievements during online training**

### *6.6.1. The most important knowledge and skills obtained at the training*

Regarding the elements of news writing, two groups of them were mentioned in particular by all the journalists as the most important: issues relevant to structuring and substantiating of news and issues relevant to the language – the need to be clear, concise, and to respect the audience (Table 50). Structuring news was indeed the hardest element to train and various elements of structure came up often in communication with the trainees. Journalists were provided with a scheme of the principal structure of news that included various building blocks, and asked to stick it in front of their computer so that they have a scheme handy when they write. However, because most journalists had to write news analyses (news analysis scheme was also provided) — and this format is one of the most difficult in news journalism — mastering it in four months was perhaps too ambitious a target, especially given the absence of baseline skills of news reporting. However, as Julia wrote, exercises helped her “to

correctly organise thinking while writing structural blocks piecemeal without crowding information in big blocks”.

Although the training was aimed at developing news writing skills, just to teach the mechanics of gathering information and organising it in a story was not sufficient because the reporters effectively came from the street and had no understanding of journalism. Therefore, it is not surprising that two journalists mentioned that training helped them to understand what journalism is about (Vicky) and that they need to be objective (Ellie).

To help journalists to understand the basics of the profession, some materials were additionally prepared and hyperlinked to the specific instructional materials that would shed light on various elementary journalism issues which underpin the mechanics of news writing. Edgar noted that he learned how to communicate with the sources, and Julia – how to find relevant and competent sources and ask questions. In their answers, journalists mentioned some generic skills that they also obtained despite none of the learning modules being specifically designed to develop them: critical thinking (Ellie), efficient use of time (Dina), and the ability to follow political news and understand political processes (Helen).

#### *6.6.1. Issues that remained unclear after the training*

Most journalists wrote that they got all the necessary explanations that they needed during the training (Table 51). Edgar said that he was still unclear how to make his writing “even easier, but so that it does not become too primitive, down to the bazaar-type communication”. Dina and Vicky suggested that further experience would allow them to clarify new issues that will come up after the training. As Helen pointed out, “nothing is ever resolved, there are always things to ask.”

### **6.7. Problems encountered by the trainees during online training**

#### *6.7.1. The most complicated issues of the training*

Two of the most complicated issues are linked to the lack of time (Table 52). the extensiveness of the course (Norma), and the need to combine training with work (Helen), which led to the lack of time to concentrate, to learn rules, to analyse mistakes (Julia). The presence of hyperlinks in the texts of learning materials, mentioned by Ellie as the most complicated and confusing issue of the training, has been already discussed above (see section 6.3.3). Helen pointed at the task to rewrite chunks of her own stories as the biggest complication, which was mentioned in section 312 as a complaint by Vicky. Some other issues which already came up in the answers to other questions were reiterated by Vicky and



Julia. Vicky's main problem was finding an interesting focus for a story, and Julia found it hard to sufficiently substantiate the intro in her stories.

SUMMARY The issues that need to be addressed to improve online training are: allocating time for training, preparing additional training modules on teaching structure and focus, finding less time-consuming ways to make journalists reflect on own stories which do not include the need to completely rewrite the texts, and addressing the issue of assessment of stories that would not discourage and discomfort the participants<sup>105</sup>.

#### 6.7.2. *Perceived deficiencies of the e-training as an educational setting*

Only one problem, which was not mentioned in the previous sections of this chapter, was pointed out as a problem of online training: a technical problem encountered by Dina: the website logged off on her several times just after she posted a completed exercise. Such a mishap was due to a technical matter which was used to increase the security of the training website: she was supposed to choose 'cookies' and not 'session' when logging in (Table 53).

Otherwise, reporters provided no new information to that already provided above in their answers to this question. Edgar reiterated that he was unhappy about the online educational setting. Both he and Richard, who expressed his negative assessment of online setting in ICQ communication with me, insisted that face-to-face instructional setting would have been more effective. For the theoretical discussion of the benefits and disadvantages of online educational settings see section 1.3 and for the discussion of the results of the experiment see Chapter 7.

Journalists mentioned lack of time for training (Helen, Norma, Julia, Edgar) as their biggest problem. However, while more exercises can be created, lack of time for training is not a problem of the online educational setting per se. Face-to-face learning is also impossible if no time is invested in it. This issue could not be resolved by the instructor but only by the media organisation that commissioned the training (see discussion in Chapter 7)<sup>106</sup>. Some journalists, however, found various ways of coping with the lack of time for training, confirming the popular advantage of the online training as the opportunity to study 'anywhere, anytime' and the saying that those who want to do something look for the opportunities rather than for excuses not to do something.

---

<sup>105</sup> Apparently, the option of simply turning off the NTA did not work as the journalists wanted to monitor their progress during training

<sup>106</sup> When journalists complained to me about lack of time for training in the early stages of the training, I spoke to the management of the Agency, but they were reluctant to create special time for the journalists to work on training, saying only that they allow journalists to spend one hour a day on training, but they needed to fit this hour into their working schedule so that it did not interfere with their main work.

As online training is a learner-centred instructional environment, it was not considered expedient to insist on the mandatory use of any of its part but to put the responsibility for the work and the results of training on its participants. The motivation, as shown by countless literature, should come from within, be intrinsic (Butler, 1988; Merrienboer & Sluijsmans, 2009; Newstrom, 1983; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

For instance, Dina, Helen, and Ellie were training at home and often contacted me on the weekends. Ellie kept in touch even when on assignments abroad as soon as she had some spare time. Helen wrote in her impact report about the training<sup>107</sup> that first she tried reading training materials and doing exercises in the office, but soon understood “that this is hopeless, because it is impossible to concentrate on other assignments, and it is very noisy in the office”. She moved her studies home, but understood that this was also not a good idea because then the work took “a lot more time than had been agreed” with the management, and no time was left for other things. However, she wrote, at some point she understood that she “had become engaged”. She wrote that she started to do exercises not because she had to, but because it was interesting: “I wanted to write better. There were many questions, and I wanted to sort out everything that I did not understand. Then it became easier.” This opinion, as well as several other trainees’ statements in this chapter confirm the notions in literature on teaching and psychology that intrinsic motivation is crucial to online learning (Busquets, et al., 2009; S. Hiltz & Wellman, 1997; Merrienboer & Ayres, 2005; Swan, 2006b). See more discussion of this issue in Chapter 7.

As Vicky and Ellie noted (and Helen, too, in her answer to one of the previous questions), they became engaged with the training and were willing to do more than the SET was suggesting. But, they noted, the number of exercises was insufficient. The instructional modules in the SET were prepared mainly to address mistakes (i.e. for the ‘unacceptable’ and ‘inappropriate’ levels of performance) in order for the trainees to achieve the target, an ‘acceptable’ level of performance. However, not all the modules were supplied with exercises, but only the most complicated ones. Perhaps, not only should exercises be prepared for each module in these low levels, but more exercises for the ‘acceptable’ level which the advanced trainees may use when they get too far ahead of their colleagues should be prepared. Adding exercises could be considered to the ‘good’ and ‘outstanding’ levels of quality, which may support the intrinsic motivation of the trainees to achieve higher levels of competencies in news writing.

---

<sup>107</sup> Journalists prepared an unstructured impact report about the training before answering questions in the survey, and this information was used for additional insight into their answers.

### 6.7.3. *Psychological difficulties of the e-training*

Only Norma did not mention psychological difficulties. The other trainees referred to two groups of problems. One, as mentioned in the previous sections, concerned criticism in marked stories and harsh assessment. Another problem was getting started.

Helen, Edgar, and Dina were apparently afraid to fail while Dina was expecting a ‘sentence’ coming with the marked copy, and Edgar also felt unhappy because of harsh fines for mistakes and because he could not compare his assessments with the other trainees’ ones (Table 54). But while Dina understood that one “can’t move forward without it [assessment]” and Helen realised that she needed to move on despite her fears, Edgar was apparently frustrated until the end of the training, persistently criticising the system of assessment (but considering it useful because it allowed him to monitor his progress).

Another perceived psychological hardship was the difficulty to get engaged. Some journalists, including Helen, Ellie and Vicky, were frustrated at the start of the training. “I could not understand what was required from me, what the story structure means, and so forth”, wrote Ellie. Interestingly, lack of understanding took place despite the training website giving a thorough description of every step to take in the introduction to the training on its front page. Apparently, the trainees needed personal communication with the trainer. Vicky noted that only communication by ICQ allowed her to understand “the sense and the principles of the training”. Similar synchronous communication by ICQ helped Ellie and Helen to get engaged and move on with the training.

### 6.7.4. *The trainees’ reasoning of why they did not quit the training when it became too difficult*

Norma, Dina, Vicky and Ellie wrote that they had never wanted to quit training (Table 55). Helen, rather than quitting training, “wanted to quit the job, and not once”<sup>108</sup>. However, she “got to like journalism” and understood that she wants “to do more of it and to do it better.” Equally, two trainees — Julia and Edgar — who considered quitting training several times because of low assessments, realised that training was in their interest. “I understood that it [quitting training] will not help my job, and for me the success at my job is the most important thing”, Julia wrote. Edgar reiterated: “I understood that to train is in my interest, that I need to learn and to understand what I should do and how.”

---

<sup>108</sup> As already mentioned, Helen was criticised by the management for her slowness in writing, especially writing news analysis type of stories. Helen and I had a talk by ICQ about how to deal with the issue and I recommended she focus on the positive input that she was bringing to the agency: meticulousness in dealing with facts and depth of analysis.

## 6.8. Self-assessment of own improvement and satisfaction with the online training

### 6.8.1. *Comparison of the pre-training and post-training ability to write news*

All journalists noted that they moved from zero to some ability to write news, but only two of them soberly graded their abilities in points: Ellie gave herself '3' and Vicky '3.5' out of '5' points (Table 56). Ellie wrote: "Before the training I could not write news, now the news I was writing before looks funny to me. Now when I have a story idea, I get a clear structure in my head and I clearly see where and what I should write". Edgar considered the difference between his initial quality of writing and the post-training quality as "great", adding: "Before, I could not even get why all this stuff is needed, but now I understand it." Julia also highly appreciated her achievements: "I could not write news at all, but now when I compare my stories and western stories about the Middle East, I see that there is no big difference."

Most journalists suggested that they needed more experience to achieve better results.

### 6.8.2. *Satisfaction with the results of the training*

Ellie was the only one graduate of the training who graded her satisfaction with the results of the training with '5' (Table 57). She wrote that after the training she knows "how to work with sources, how to write according to the structure, and what the readers want from me". Most training graduates, as can be seen from Table 57, rated their satisfaction at the '4' level and explained the reasons for not reaching the maximal satisfaction with lack of time or other personal issues. Helen wrote that her satisfaction was not the highest because she "did not manage to read everything that is important and needed", Vicky regretted that she "wasted a lot of time in the beginning of the training" and she was "remorseful" for her "slowness". Julia graded her satisfaction at the level of '4' because "there were more benefits from this training for my work than harm"<sup>109</sup>. Edgar explained his choice of the grade '4' with the lack of time to spend on training. Norma with the satisfaction level of '3', wrote that it was "because I worked insufficiently to achieve the results that I wanted". None explained any lack of maximal satisfaction with the content of structure of the online training itself, technical problems or problems with the course instructor.

---

<sup>109</sup> Julia, as it was mentioned above, was frustrated because of a lot of perceived criticism about her work and low assessments, and two times wanted to quit training

## **6.9. Suggestions by the graduates on how to improve training**

### *6.9.1. Improvements for online training*

Dina was the only trainee who made a new suggestion on how to improve online training: to make reading marked stories of other trainees mandatory (Table 58). Other trainees effectively repeated their earlier comments (create more exercises, quizzes, examples, discussions on the forum, do not use examples and exercises that require specific knowledge, do not demand stories be rewritten if too much needs to be rewritten. Edgar reiterated that assessments should be gotten rid of and Ellie – that hyperlinks in the learning materials should also be deleted.

## **6.10. The instructor's time**

The time spent by this researcher on assessing and marking news stories in her experience of online training of reporters in post-Communist countries and in the pilot experiments in Azerbaijan ranged from 25 minutes to 2.5 hours, on average about 45 minutes depending on the length and the complexity of each story. Most of the time was spent on explaining each mistake and making suggestions on how to write particular parts better, which was often followed by extensive correspondence by email, also demanding of the trainer's time. Using the SET allowed the average time to be halved while most of the reviewing and marking took less than 30 minutes. However, some longer stories, especially news analyses, still took longer to mark. But, more importantly, perhaps, than just shortening time spent on marking, using the SET in which typical mistakes did not have to be addressed other than inserting a quick code next to the mistake, allowed the instructor to concentrate on unusual, peculiar or unique instances in the stories or give creative suggestions regarding other possible news angles. Expanding the SET with more training modules is likely to spare even more time for the instructor to individualise online training.

## **Conclusions**

Four months of online training with the use of the teaching tools prepared in this research, NTA (news texts assessment) and, based on it, SET (scoring e-rubric), was sufficient to achieve the internationally 'acceptable' level of news writing for 75 percent of the training participants, all of whom had negligible or no experience in news writing and many no experience in journalism.

The results of the online training confirmed the widely known pedagogical axiom: in general, the trainees who used the opportunities of the training better than the others, showed initiative and interest, achieved better results.

The most popular elements of online training, as perceived by the trainees, were stories, marked by the online trainer; the opportunity to monitor own results during the training; communication with the trainer; exercises in the learning modules of the SET; reading colleagues' marked stories; examples in the learning materials; instructional texts; and quizzes. The least popular elements were assessment, hyperlinks in learning texts, and rewriting chunks of own news stories in which mistakes were made.

It should also not be expected that after fulfilling one training module the trainees are able to prevent the same mistake being repeated. Online tools, developed in this research, allowed the trainees to see and analyse how new notions are applied in different contexts, to practise them in learning exercises, and to further apply them when writing own stories for publication. The same mistake may be repeated several times until the journalist is able to recognise it and prevent it.

The trainees should not be expected to train in their own time. The media should create conditions to help the trainees, including allocating them special time to train and, perhaps, a quiet room in which they can concentrate on the training.

Trainees had different problems in news writing and different preferences in choosing the elements of self-training in the SET, perhaps, because some elements conformed to their learning styles more than the others. Therefore, the opportunity to individualise online training and organise it in the modular fashion in which the trainees are able to choose the tasks which they consider useful is an advantage of online non-linear instructional setting.

Examples and exercises in the SET should contain material which should be based on easy to understand local, or otherwise engaging, content. Especially appreciated and memorable are examples which include humour and human interest.

Some elements of the SET need to be modified, some multiplied, some extended.

Instructional texts should be no longer than one page, more exercises should be prepared, quizzes should be more challenging and there should be more of them, and tests may be prepared to check the level of understanding of new material immediately after the trainee fulfils a learning module.

More pre-training communication is needed with the trainees who are insecure and sensitive to low assessment of their work. The advantages they are getting by the option of seeing their assessments must be explained more extensively.

Some trainees feel frustration at the beginning of online training because of the lack of understanding of how it works and absence of the instructor in front of them. Live communication with the trainer should start occurring at the early stages of online training to help the trainees to become engaged with the training

Using the SET at least halves the time spent on marking news stories and, because typical mistakes and basics of news writing do not need to be addressed other than by inserting a code in the marked text, the SET allows the trainer to concentrate on unusual, peculiar, unique or creative issues in the story.

## Chapter 7. Discussion of the results of the experiment

There are many ways to help working professionals to improve the quality of their work. Among the most effective ways are those which are based on self-learning and the will of professionals to find ways and assistance to improve the quality of their work. In the psychological theory on self-determination people who demonstrate such useful behaviour are described as possessing both intrinsic motivation, which is linked to interest-related motives, and extrinsic motivation, or striving to achieve some personally-significant goals (Deci & Ryan, 2002; Legault, Green-Demers, & Pelletier, 2006, p. 9).

A professional online educational setting is, therefore, learner-centred and is based on the premise that professionals have both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to improve the quality of their work. In the modern digital era online professional training is becoming popular for many reasons including that it allows trainees to improve without having to leave their office and is cost-effective for both participants (Roy & Raymond, 2006), and their instructors (Jung, 2005; Rosenberg, 2001; Strother, 2002). This tendency can be equally applied to training in journalism. Some journalism coaches including Scanlan (2000) and Rich (2009) suggest that journalists should take more charge of their improvement while the writing coaches help them only on demand. Scanlan writes: “the power to recognize a story’s problems and the means to fix them lie inside you” while the coach “can help you uncover what you already know instinctively” (Scanlan, 2000a, p. VIII).

However, individual coaching, provided regularly by experts of the calibre of Scanlan or Rich, is rare in less wealthy media outlets. And it is almost never the case in low-budget media organisations in transitional and developing countries which cannot afford such coaches. Nor can they expect them to spend long time in their newsrooms even if someone else is paying for them to be there. Online learner-centred training may be an option for media organisations with limited budgets provided that both the journalists and their administration have sufficient desire to improve the quality of their work. This research created one possible model of online professional journalistic self-regulated training in news writing.

Two main pedagogical tools were prepared for this training, both the first of their kind in news journalism training: the online criterion-based system to assess news writing quality (news writing assessment, or NTA) and a virtual textbook based on the NTA (scoring e-textbook, or SET).



Developing an assessment system is considered laborious and time-consuming (Andrade & Du, 2005; Cooper, 2000; Moskal & Leydens, 2000; Ridgway & McCusker, 2004; Woolf, 2004). It took several stages and nearly two years of extensive analytical and field research to develop a 13-criteria-based scoring rubric to assess the quality of news texts:

- review of literature helped to identify the most important categories and criteria of news writing, and statements from various textbooks and academic literature were used to deduct descriptors for the various criteria and assigning them into 5 levels of quality
- experience of this researcher in conducting online training, in which news stories were assessed by a monstrous 190-criteria long format, helped to avoid creating too extensive an assessment system
- the prototype of the NTA was tested by 23 top western journalism experts who assessed news stories using this format and applying statistical analysis to the data allowed the creation of a weighted rubric which could not only assess news stories, but was also useful — if applied consistently — to monitor the changes of news competencies
- a system of major fines to address the core elements of news writing — ‘accuracy and credibility’ and ‘objectivity as a method’ was created as an instrument to focus the trainees’ attention to these criteria
- finally, the NTA was tested in the main experiment for training news reporters and showed its workability and usefulness as both an assessment and a monitoring system and supported the first hypothesis of this research.

The NTA was developed using news stories as the basis and cannot be meaningfully applied to other journalistic genres. Equally, comparing assessments across different types of news stories, for instance news features with hard news, may appear unsound. However, comparing news stories of similar types, comparing news stories written by the trainees with those written by reputable journalists, or monitoring changes in the development of news writing skills over time can give useful and meaningful information and help to support the intrinsic motivation of reporters to improve. Consistency that the NTA is able to provide because of the explicitness of the overwhelming majority of its content is perhaps its main advantage.

The level of detail in the content of the descriptors in the NTA allowed it to be used as a base of instructional design for the e-textbook, which was created by linking instructional modules to each descriptor in the NTA. This textbook was named e-scoring textbook (SET), because it combines the functions of online assessment and online instruction. Each module includes short instructional files and examples, and complicated materials contain exercises and some other interactive elements that the trainees can use for self-regulated training.

It was hoped these two tools would have the potential to provide substantial corrective feedback and explanations of difficult issues that inexperienced reporters need. In the psychology and education literature, corrective feedback has been shown to be most effective in changing subsequent performance of trainees until they achieve the desired level (Brinko,

1993; Kielty, 2004; Wiist, 1997). Both tools were then tested in the experiment. In this chapter the results of the experiment will be discussed.

The results of the experiment will be assessed within the framework of cognitive load theory. As was already mentioned in the review of literature, learning in the cognitive load theory is understood as recognising important facets of the new material, mentally organising it in a coherent structure and integrating it with pre-existing knowledge and skills by engaging in substantial cognitive processing (Mayer & Moreno, 2003).

## **7.1. The length and the mode of training sessions**

The complication of this research was that online training was integrated in the busy professional schedule in which journalists worked. The trainees were not provided special time to spend on training, but were just told to create their own time for training in breaks between their assignments. As these breaks were supposed to be short, all instructional elements for the SET were prepared using postulates of cognitive load theory that require learning experiences to be short so that the working memory can effectively process them (Cooper, 1998; Merrienboer & Ayres, 2005).

However, the theoretical framework that outlines working capacity is useful to explain cognitive processes, but it cannot be used to compose instructional units which would not under- or overload the trainee, including for the reason that each trainee comes to training with certain previous knowledge, aptitudes, and experiences. Therefore, a rule of thumb was used and it was decided to limit any element of the SET to one page only and subsequently change the length in line with trainees' wishes. During the experiment, some trainees said that some instructional texts were too long. Therefore, the length of about one page — or just as much as could be seen on a computer screen — could be considered an appropriate length for an online instructional element.

It was not clear from the answers of the graduates of the training, which training mode they preferred. Some were apparently happy to work in the breaks between work assignments, some stayed to self-train after work, some took training work home. It is, perhaps, inexpedient to regulate the mode of training for all the training participants because of their different learning styles, demands of their work, and means available to them<sup>110</sup>. However, as results of analysis of the time spent by the reporters on one training module shows (Tables 46-48), approximately one hour a day would have been sufficient for the journalists to spend

---

<sup>110</sup> Vicky, for instance, was happy to train from home, but she often mentioned a particular difficulty — whenever strong winds blew, the Internet switched off. Being situated on the shore of the Caspian Sea, Baku is a very windy city.

on training activities. Perhaps, it should be more at the start of the training, and less close to the end of it.

## 7.2. Hyperlinks

Some trainees pointed out that hyperlinks in the text interfered with the acquisition of new knowledge.

Hyperlinks in the SET were used in two elements: in instructional materials and in answers to the interactive exercises. In most instructional files no more than 2-3 hyperlinks were used in the body of the text where they were connected to particular elements that may be unknown to the inexperienced trainees. Hyperlinks were meant to help the trainees and explain new or difficult concepts to help trainees achieve a coherent performance at the end of the training session. For instance, for the instruction on the file ‘text contains exaggerations’ a hyperlink to the file ‘journalistic truth’ is used, because this concept cannot be understood simply through common sense or in an abstract sense (see example on Figure 15). Hyperlinks were also used to stimulate the trainees to enlarge their knowledge base by linking the instructional file to similar information. Cognitive load theory suggests the use of hyperlinks between connected concepts, which are considered to be especially significant at the early stage of acquisition of cognitive skills (Patel & Russell, 2002). Adding hyperlinks to instructional elements was designed to help the trainees when they needed it so that the reporters would be relieved of having to search for explanations elsewhere, including by using the search engine of the training website or googling for the explanations.

However, while three trainees found hyperlinks helpful for deeper learning, four of the seven trainees said hyperlinks interfered with their learning because using them made them browse through other instructional materials to the point that they forgot where they had started. One recommendation was to get rid of all the hyperlinks in the body of instructional texts and concentrate all hyperlinks at the bottom of the files.

The hyperlinks in the body of the instructional materials, however, were created not to confuse the trainees but to widen their knowledge base, including explaining what they do not know or may not know. Hyperlinks are not something completely unknown to journalists. Links connecting new material to what has been already published, but may not be known by every reader, are used in most online media.<sup>111</sup> And, indeed, to understand some complicated issues the trainees need to learn other issues which underpin what they do not know. The

---

<sup>111</sup> Despite my repeated recommendations the Agency has not taken up the option of hyperlinking on its website

theory behind it is that meaningful learning occurs when the new knowledge is appended to what the person already knows (Vygotsky, 1962, 1978). In cognitive load theory it is explained as follows: the new knowledge, after being processed in the working memory, is added to the cognitive schemas existing in the long-term memory. Without proper cognitive processing, new concepts have no chance of being digested and subsequently transferred to long-term memory and automated for unconscious use (Sweller & Chandler, 1994). So in theory, by refusing to use hyperlinks — especially those that explain difficult or unknown notions — the trainees pass up on additional benefits that the training may provide.

However, there is a serious contradiction that needs to be addressed. On the one hand, inexperienced journalists need to learn more about news journalism to build more complex abilities on the foundation of basic news writing elements and notions. Hyperlinks are also designed to help them contextualise new knowledge within the broader picture of news journalism. Hyperlinks are shown in literature as stimulating informal learning, or learning on the initiative of the trainees. The presence of hyperlinks is also important because when none of the training participants have journalistic education (which is the case for many of the journalism trainees who participate in training in post-communist countries), or read good textbooks so that they can understand at least the basic notions of journalism. Some had not read even the paper-based textbook prepared for them to read before they started training. As Helen, whose background is in foreign languages, noted, she did not complete reading the textbook in the week before she started training. She read it as the training went along.

On the other hand the presence of hyperlinks in the instructional elements created ‘hatred’, as Edgar put it, up to the point that he did not even want to start reading the instructions. Despite few instructional files containing more than two or three such hyperlinks, this ‘hatred’ may be explained as an unconscious attempt by the trainees to avoid what in cognitive load theory is labelled a ‘split-attention effect’ that causes cognitive overload (Chandler & Sweller, 1992; Yeing, Jin, & Sweller, 1998). Avoiding this effect was considered when preparing the elements of the SET, including when putting hyperlinks in the instructional materials and interactive exercises. It was believed to be a useful way of getting rid of the extraneous workload of having to spend time looking for explanations of unknown, unclear or forgotten issues. But in practice hyperlinks appeared to have created another type of the split-attention effect by causing extraneous cognitive load when the trainees were using them — by distracting them from what they initially wanted to do. Research shows that even short explanatory notes integrated in text may cause the split-attention effect, depending on the experience and even age of the learners (Yeing, et al., 1998). DeStefano & LiFevre (2007) point out that “every time a reader chooses to follow an embedded link, the text he or she encounters... potentially functions as an interruption of the ongoing comprehension process”

(p. 1619). Such interruptions particularly impair learning if the content of the hyperlinked material is demanding (Lorch, 1993). The latter point is difficult to apply to this study as, because of different prior knowledge, it is impossible to judge whether the hyperlinked material is too demanding.

There is also an ‘on the third hand’: if hyperlinked materials contain something that the learner already knows, or repeat what has been already understood, they can cause a so-called ‘redundancy effect’ and also increase the extraneous cognitive load, thus impairing performance (Chandler & Sweller, 1992; Cooper, 1998; Yeing, et al., 1998). Apparently, creating the content of the online instructional elements is an extremely difficult task if all these conditions are to be taken into account, because trainees usually have different experiences and knowledge, and various aptitudes. For instance, one trainee mentioned when assessing the overall quality of instructional materials that they were sometimes unclear — which may mean that they contained an insufficient number of hyperlinks<sup>112</sup>. Perhaps future research into various compositions of instructional elements could clarify this issue by finding the appropriate balance in the presentation of the explanatory elements in the instruction for journalism training. Until then, three suggestions could be made to trainees who participate in online training: first, to ignore the hyperlinks in the texts if the material is known<sup>113</sup>; second, to read the hyperlinked material after the main instructional file is read; and third, to read the hyperlinked instructional materials first if the main instruction cannot be understood without reading them. This, of course, can create a chain effect of endless reading, mentioned by Julia, who sometimes forgot where she started after being diverted by hyperlinks. But it is inexpedient to get rid of a learning element which other journalists find helpful. The trainees should make their own decision about what they should ignore, put off, or read now.

Technically, hyperlinks in the form of clickable codes, as they have been used in this research, could be recreated by making certain words or phrases in the text clickable. However, it is unclear whether such a trick would work any differently: journalists would still need to understand that there is some instruction behind the clickable selection that needs to be read and they will have to make a choice.

---

<sup>112</sup> Instructional modules were assessed for their clarity and difficulty by the trainees after they used them for self-training. Changes and clarifications were subsequently made if the suggestions were valid. The trainees also had an option to clarify difficult issues with the instructor on the forum. Such option was popular, but often trainees wrote that they had no questions

<sup>113</sup> This website showed the name of the hyperlinked material when a cursor was placed on it

### 7.3. Transfer of new knowledge into practice

Most trainees struggled to use their new knowledge in writing successive stories. The process of utilising new knowledge in practice is usually labelled as knowledge transfer. Lack of knowledge transfer was the fundamental reason for the lack of achievement and the lack of stability of the results of the online training. Asked why they kept repeating the same mistakes even after they had been alerted to them several times, the trainees gave explanations that suggest that what was happening was beyond their conscious control. Helen summed it up:

When writing a story I always want to keep in mind all your suggestions, but it does not always happen. I can make it work in one place of the text, but fail in another. When I saw the repetition of the same mistake I thought ‘S\*, again I missed it’. Honestly. I looked in the learning materials again, and did additional sets of exercises if there were any. But still, the same mistakes kept cropping up.

Obviously, the competencies that Helen wrote she kept in mind were not automated and did not become skills. Keeping in mind a lot of suggestions at the same time apparently caused her cognitive overload. However, the approach that Helen was using — going back and repeating information in the learning materials — helped her to speed up the process of automation. In the end Helen and Ellie, who also re-read learning materials and often discussed difficult notions in ICQ communications, demonstrated relative stability in their achievements, which were somewhat better than other trainees’, each having produced three stories that exceeded the target level.

Several reasons are likely to contribute to problems with the transfer of knowledge. Some of these reasons may explain why short-term workshops are unlikely to result in much learning if the subjects are novice or relearning journalists. The first reason to be considered is the complexity of news writing skills. The second is the conditions in which learning in this programme took place. The third is the abundance of deficiencies in news writing that need time and practice to be fixed. Lastly, some problems with the instructional design must also have contributed to the lack of achievement. All these reasons seem very likely to have caused substantial cognitive overload that impaired learning. More research is needed to understand how to solve the problem of automation of skills in the professional training environment.

#### 7.3.1. *The complexity of news writing skills*

News writing practice is not a simple mechanism... If journalists simply processed information, we might expect that press releases written to read like news stories would be published verbatim (Matheson, 2001, p. 9).

To prepare the NTA, thousands of statements published in journalistic academic and professional literature were processed. Many of them were contradictory. Some, such as the

notion of ‘objectivity’ were even rejected. It was extremely difficult to come up with a comprehensive but usable classification of news writing skills and perhaps millions more little subtleties were left behind. In this research, only the basic news writing skills were taught, but to avoid being formulaic and not telling the trainees to march in step, they were presented with alternatives in the use of various elements, up to the point of how to be creative at the ‘outstanding’ level of performance. They did not have to learn that, as the target of the training was set only at achieving the acceptable level of news writing competence, but they were free to investigate the options. All in all, over 700 instructional materials were prepared to train journalists, most one page long (and a lot more pages may be added on an as-needed basis). However, it is a quite a formidable task even to read a 700-page textbook that is packed with new information let alone digest all the information and turn into skills. And to succeed, journalists not only had to do the reading, but practical tasks coming with the instructional modules – exercises, rewriting bits of their stories with mistakes, keeping a diary, recording their conclusions, and most importantly, thinking about what they just learned. And let us not forget they also had to work.

### 7.3.2. *Conditions of training*

Benjamin Bloom, whose taxonomy of educational objectives is widely used in pedagogy, and who directed research into the development of exceptional talent, wrote in his famous *Mastery Learning* that “each student should be allowed the time he (sic) needs to learn a subject” (Bloom, 1968, p. 51) and ways should be found to provide the learners with “whatever time is needed” (ibid). This is rarely the case in workplace learning. As the reporters who participated in the experiment were not provided with a special timetable in accordance with which they could legitimately take time off to use on training<sup>114</sup> they squeezed their training sessions in short breaks between their assignments because their work was a priority. It is likely that in those short breaks — when their colleagues had a cup of tea or a chat — their working memory, instead of focusing on learning, was occupied with thinking about the next assignment. Such multi-tasking and lack of concentration causes the split-attention effect that has been already mentioned. This effect inhibits learning and is blamed by researchers for hindering transfer of the learned material to the long-term memory (Chandler & Sweller, 1992). Multi-tasking not only harmed the opportunity for the working memory to process the materials on the spot, but ultimately prevented the most important element of learning from happening: the formation of schemas for certain learned capabilities, which are cognitive constructs in the long-term memory that organise and store information

---

<sup>114</sup> They were told by management that they have an hour a day for training when they can make the time

in a manner that allows it to be recalled on demand (Chandler & Sweller, 1992). These schemas, or, in other words, automated skills that are applied unconsciously, help to protect the working memory from overload.

Another limitation imposed by the conditions of the training was that it took place in a busy, noisy editorial office with a lot of distraction. For learning a “task with a considerable intellectual component” Sweller & Chandler (1994, p. 230) recommend “quiet contemplation and purely mental consideration of the various aspects of the task”. Perhaps not only allocating the trainees special time for training, but also providing a special quiet place in the office in which journalists can concentrate would help get rid of unnecessary extraneous load and help the trainees to focus all their cognitive resources on the task. One way, however, may be limiting the instruction at the initial stages of training to several elements only that happen to be the most difficult for the particular group of trainees. Such difficult elements may be, perhaps, identified by assessing several stories written by the training group prior to the beginning of training. Many such elements are listed in the introduction to this research.

### *7.3.3. Lack of practice*

Workplace learning including online learning is often cited as having an advantage of stimulating the immediate transfer of what was learned into practice (Cole, 2006; Merriënboer, Schuurman, Croock, & Paas, 2002; Rugelj, 2001). However, the transfer was not immediate in this training. One more reason can be considered as complicating the transfer. In addition to news writing being a complex skill functioning in an ill-defined domain, every time journalists write a story they need to deal with the additional cognitive load: new content. In other words, training of journalists cannot be equated to learning an additional trick to accelerate assembling some device on a conveyer belt. The complexity of what they were undertaking every day is likely to cause substantial cognitive overloading. Edgar wrote that it was difficult for him to recognise the same elements in different kinds of stories. This means that the knowledge transfer did not take place. As Mayer & Wittrock (1996) wrote, until the learners are able to apply what was taught to new contexts meaningful learning has not taken place. Cognitive schemas, or hierarchical information networks in the long-term memory (Cooper, 1998), take time to develop (Sweller & Chandler, 1994). As no one can learn to drive in one day after seeing how other people drive or listening to a lecture about how to drive, it is unlikely that on hearing how to write news and even getting some basic practice — as often happens in 3-day journalism workshops on news writing — reporters will be able to exercise new skills in all their complexity in various contexts. The formation and automation of cognitive schemas in the long-term memory is a process that could take a long time depending on the complexity of new knowledge, previous experiences,



the motivation, aptitudes of trainees, and cognitive load already imposed on them in their workplace. These schemas later become the base to which new elements can be added (Cooper, 1998). When there are no schemas — as is the case with novice reporters — then, according to the logic of cognitive learning theory, new knowledge cannot be added anywhere until it is properly contextualised by being practised, recognised in different contexts, and become a schema in the long-term memory with the potential to automation if practised regularly. A trainer pointing out a mistake or a trainee completing a training module are unlikely to result in forming a schema let alone its automation. But an even bigger problem is the abundance of small and big deficiencies in the trainees' news writing. Note that some had zero experience and some became staff writers only a few weeks before starting the training.

In a perfect world, the trainees who participated in the experiment in this study should have been sent to university and started from scratch. However, the Agency went for online training. During the negotiations about this training, the Agency's director gave several reasons to justify his choice of online training. Firstly, the local university was not teaching journalists modern standards of news writing. Indeed, two Baku university graduates who participated in the pilot experiment were no better than those who had no university degree — everyone was writing according to local standards. The same phenomenon of low educational standards in universities of post-communist countries is described in the book *Journalism education in countries with limited media freedom* (Josephi, 2010), and also mentioned in the investigation of the state of the media in these countries by the Netherland-based organisation Press Now (Thompson, Manro, & Palmer, 2004). One of the graduates had been caught twice plagiarising stories during the pilot experiment. The second reason was a recommendation by the Washington-based IREX with which this researcher co-operated for 10 years. The third reason was two pilot experiments, which helped many of the Agency's reporters to upgrade standards of their news writing.

Many trainees wrote that they needed more time for training. One trainee said that the training is too short for the content it purports to teach.<sup>115</sup> Julia, another trainee, wrote: "I often could not utilise what I learned about substantiating the intro in my own stories<sup>116</sup> despite me trying to follow the instructions and imitate the examples. It was because there was always insufficient time to concentrate, to learn all the rules, to analyse my own mistakes (despite me always doing it)." The trainees apparently understood that they need more time to practise

---

<sup>115</sup> Norma wrote that the training was too short, but at the same time she did not even complete the training let alone use the opportunity suggested to all trainees that they should feel free to proceed with the training if they wished

<sup>116</sup> Julia did not provide evidence to back up the intro 9 times

what they learned. For instance, Vicky wrote: “I need a lot of experience, the skill will come with practice”, and Dina reiterated: “I need more experience — a lot more than I have now”. At the end of the training all the trainees were told that they could continue with the training as long as they needed help. Some indeed approached me with a request to mark stories or asked questions, but it did not become regular training. The journalists were apparently embarrassed to take my time.

#### *7.3.4. Problems in the instructional design*

The process of organising the conditions helpful for the formation and automation of cognitive schemas is the primary focus of the instruction design (Sweller & Chandler, 1994). One of the major faults of instructional designs is that they overload the learners, impairing learning. “Information can be difficult to assimilate either because it is extensive, or because it is structured in a manner that forces us to process several elements simultaneously resulting in a heavy cognitive load. We are forced to process elements simultaneously when they interact and cannot be considered in isolation” (Sweller & Chandler, 1994, p. 225). This statement, if taken literally, undermines the entire practice of pedagogy. At school, in universities, during workshops or any other learning experience, it is not just ‘several elements’ that cause ‘heavy cognitive load’ by being taught simultaneously, but many more. Processing any element in isolation is practically impossible.

In this research a lot of effort was put into trying to prepare instructional materials in a way targeted to reduce cognitive load. They were written in simple language, made only one main point with some explanations, a few examples and sometimes two or three hyperlinks. However, direct assessment of the cognitive load is impossible. Even experts in cognitive load theory do not measure cognitive load but consider it indirectly. For instance, Miller (1956) — whose work is cited by many cognitive load proponents — considers the limitation of the working memory when ‘seven elements plus or minus two’ are used simultaneously. But what is an ‘element’ in the case of such an ill-defined field as journalism news writing? What exactly falls into the range of ‘seven elements plus or minus two’? Can the explanation of the ability to remember the number of digits or steps in solving equations be transferred to the explanation of abilities to remember elements in complex and ill-defined knowledge? Apparently not. Another theoretic postulate that suggests that when the working memory is supposed not only to hold, but also to process — organise, contrast, compare, analyse — information, “humans are probably only able to deal with two or three items of information simultaneously” (Sweller, et al., 1998, p. 252) only worsens an already complicated problem. Again, how could this be meaningfully transferred into the specific condition of journalism news training? Many of the conclusions by cognitive load theorists have been made based on

mathematics teaching. But even they admit that one step of an equation may be one ‘element’ for an inexperienced learner, while for a more experienced learner the whole equation could have been seen as an ‘element’ (ibid). But what is an ‘element’ or ‘item’ in teaching elements of journalism?

In Merrienboer & Ayres’s (2005) recommendations on how to apply cognitive load theory to e-learning the authors advise avoiding using complex materials, or to start with the easy ones and then gradually increase their complexity. This has been considered when preparing elements of the SET by preparing short instructions supported by other elements — each of which is optional. For instance, a trainee may firstly just read the instructional material and think about it. Later the material can be re-read and an exercise done. There was no time pressure set except the condition that some training should be done every day.<sup>117</sup> No actions were taken against the procrastinators apart from trying to convince them that training was in their interest. In many cases, especially in the middle and at the end of training, I had to do the opposite, for instance ask some trainees not to do all the possible exercises they could find on the training website but rather to concentrate on thinking over what they had done and contemplate how they could apply the knowledge to other contexts. I believe that the future of such training lies in creating ways to involve the trainees in such thinking and for them to consider ways of applying the new knowledge in various situations both specially created and real.

## **7.4. Language problems**

Problems with use of language were the most frequent errors. In many stories various deficiencies in the use of language were marked repeatedly. In western offices language problems are regulated by the house style and mistakes are fixed by copy-editors. However editorial offices in poorer countries are understaffed, and, as the experience of this researcher in training in post-USSR countries shows, stylebooks are non-existent or incomplete, the culture of their use is lacking or absent, and the copy-editors are sometimes not much better in language, grammar and style issues than the reporters. That is why the ‘use of language’ as an element of news writing training is important.

However, language problems appeared to be the most stubborn. Some problems with the use of officialese or important-sounding words disguising a lack of meaning were extremely hard to fight because they were part of the everyday language in Azerbaijan. It may sound surprising, but just as India developed its own version of English, Azerbaijan and Central

---

<sup>117</sup> The website had an option of “secretly policing” what the trainees were doing. All their activities were registered and every file they opened and time spent on it was recorded

Asian post-USSR countries have also been infiltrated by the proxy-Russian language. Azeri Russian is used by officials, by all the media, and in everyday life. The trainees, including ethnic Russians, were surprised when a list of 43 'forbidden words and expressions' was produced with the recommendation they stick it to their computers. Most of the words from the list were part of their daily lexicon, for instance 'in the given issue' instead of 'this'. Such well-ingrained habits are extremely difficult to change, and they did not change completely. However, that many reporters understood that they should write clearly and for the people was considered to be a major breakthrough.

## **7.5. Procrastination**

Several trainees mentioned the delay with getting to start training. More or less all the reporters except Ellie were slow at the start. When in the beginning of September 2008 the potential trainees were asked to search through the website, the amount of work to be done may have seemed to them intimidating. In such situations some people put tasks off to the last possible minute. Such delay to starting or completing tasks in psychological literature is called behavioural procrastination (Beswick, Rothblum, & Mann, 1988; Stöber & Joorman, 2001). It is linked to such qualities as doubting the person's ability to fulfil the task, fear of failure, low self-esteem, inability to organise their time (Shoham-Saloman, Avner, & Neeman, 1989; Steel, 2007), perfectionism ("Procrastination," 2006), and to such qualities of the task as demanding too much knowledge (D. Karlsson, 2006). Procrastination is also related to medical conditions such as anxiety and depression (Van Eerde, 2003). According to estimates by Ellis & Knaus (1977) over 80 percent of college students engage in procrastination, and its prevalence is growing (Steel, 2007) especially in young adults (Owens, Bowman, & Dill, 2008). Special short-term training may help people cope with the avoidance behaviour. For instance, Van Eerde reported significant decrease in avoidance behaviour at work and increase in the ability to manage time in those who participated in a 12-hour workshop (Eerde, 2003).

Related to procrastination is the fear of failure, mentioned by Helen. This fear is one of the factors why people sometimes resort to procrastination (Shoham-Saloman, et al., 1989). This training was specifically created as consisting of relatively small chunks of instruction to help the trainees to cope with the amount of training work without having to look at a huge textbook that they needed to read. However, once the trainees admit some psychological block in the start-up period, a solution must be sought. One possible solution may be getting the trainees better instructed for the start-up period, including instructing them on some strategies to fight procrastination. Among such strategies the following are often mentioned: dividing the task into manageable chunks; stop expecting perfect performance from oneself

and arranging special time for doing the specific tasks (Owens, et al., 2008; Pavlina, 2006; “Procrastination,” 2006).

## **7.6. Interaction, communication**

Some critics note that online courses discourage instructor-learner interaction (Ha, 2000; Wang, 2005). However, others found that online learning does not necessarily reduce interaction. For instance, in one study of online language learning, the students who perceived themselves as more competent had more favourable perceptions of their interaction with the instructor than did those who were less competent (Ng, Yeung, & Hon, 2006). Other studies have found that the learners’ satisfaction with the interaction with their instructor depended on the length of the online course. For instance, Delfino & Persico (2007) found that learners were more satisfied with communication during a full-semester course rather than during a five-week intensive one. They also mentioned the burden on the professor during the intensive course as opposed to when the communications were spread over the semester.

The amount of communication is “one of the most difficult issues an instructor faces when creating on-line learning environments” (Fisher, 2000, p. 90). Fisher cited a study in which the learners, who were dependent on the instructors at the start, became more independent as they moved through the online course. In this training I did not notice any reduction of communication with the trainees. For instance, Ellie in her comments about synchronous communication with the trainer by ICQ recommended that two hours a day could be specially earmarked for communication with the instructor: “I would have allocated special time for such communication, for instance 1 hour in the morning and 1 hour in the afternoon.”

While the volume of communication did not reduce over the course of this training, the content of communication changed. While in the beginning, the trainees were asking questions which showed that they did not understand the most basic elements of news writing — which is not surprising judging by their lack of experience — and the conversations showed that they had not read all the necessary instruction, by the end of the course they were talking about subtleties more than about the basics<sup>118</sup>. Opinions about communication, expressed in Table 45, show that everyone who assessed it, gave it the highest mark and especially appreciated the easy and fast communication online via ICQ. However, one interesting opinion suggested that ICQ may be a distraction. Helen wrote: “ICQ was convenient, but it was time consuming because when communication is available, one always wants to ask something. I think the most convenient was communication through the website,

---

<sup>118</sup> See examples of ICQ communications in Appendices 14 and 15

because I got replies quickly and the timeliness of communication did not suffer. But it does not lure you into just talking about everything.” This ‘talking about everything’ was indeed a problem for me, too, and, perhaps I should have dealt with it in the introduction to the online training which should have specified that only topics related to training should be discussed during online communication. However, little bits of personal communication help to build a bond and develop trust, and banning any personal communication is inexpedient. My previous experience in online training showed that when the bond and trust are established, the trainees feel more personally responsible for the results of the training. Online training like this is not mass production, but individual and personal, and building strong connections with the trainees is part of the potential success in training. However, journalists need to be warned to limit the topics of their communications to the professional after the start-up period has fulfilled its function of building trust.

### **7.7. The use of the SET and the future of digital textbooks**

A number of scholars perceive a growing gap between the demand and the supply of education (Geith & Vignare, 2008) and online journalism training is one possibility for closing the gap in demand for workplace training in media organisations. The richer the set of options for interaction is and the more the immediacy, the better the quality of online learning (ibid). To date, there is no universally agreed preference for using online textbooks. As a search on Google for ‘digital textbook’ by this researcher during the past year shows, while e-textbooks are receiving prominence and popularity in universities and even schools, many students still prefer paper-based materials.

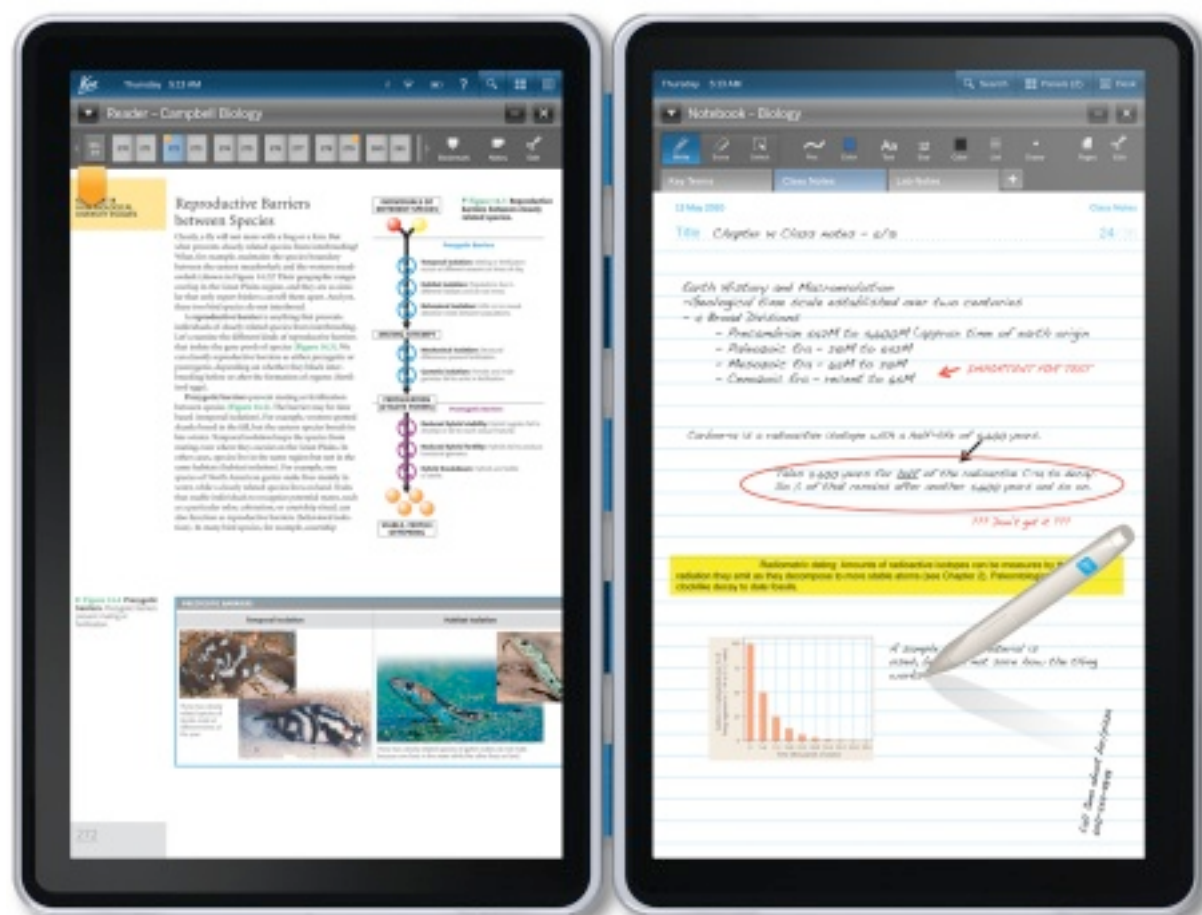
The trainees who participated in the experiment could not be labelled ‘digital natives’ as Internet penetration in Azerbaijan is relatively low compared to western countries and has only recently started to expand. This could explain why Ellie and Edgar noted that they preferred paper-based instructional materials and Edgar said his preference was face-to-face training rather than online. However, as was the case for other reporters, they were engaged in doing exercises, reading their colleagues’ marked stories and searching the website for answers to their own questions as they came up. Overall satisfaction of most trainees after using the SET was at the ‘good’ level with nearly all noting that they understood the taught concepts but needed more practice to improve their writing.

The design of SET is in line with the recently developed trends of creating digital textbooks, but it is more advanced because it combines more features than just reading and even reading and doing interactive exercises. It can also be used for assessment with the help of the NTA to which all the instructional modules are attached. However, the assessment of the SET by the

trainees at the 'good' level means that more research is needed to develop this tool to the 'excellent' level. Clarifying the materials, adding more learning modules, creating more and better exercises and examples, adding, perhaps, audio materials and videos to cater to various learning styles of the trainees are ways to improve the SET and contribute to the versions of digital textbooks that will be created in the future.

Digital learning is expanding rapidly with the development of the 'tablet' media. iPads by Apple, Kindles by Amazon or Kno's<sup>119</sup> two-panel tablet (released in 2010) that can blend textbooks, course materials, note-taking and web access and other 'tablet' e-readers may be used as the carriers of online training and the trainees may be connected any time, anywhere. In the iPad market alone about 57 million items will be shipped annually to consumers by 2015, according to a prediction by ABI Research (Harris, 2010). Amazon reported in July 2010 that for every 100 hardcover books amazon.com sold in the previous three months, it sold 143 Kindle books ("News release," 2010). Apple gave absolute statistics: in 65 days preceding June 2010 it sold 5 million e-books ("Steve Jobs on iPad ebooks: 5 million ebooks downloaded in 65 days, now reads PDFs," 2010).

<sup>119</sup> Short for 'knowledge', produced by the Kno, Inc company (<http://news.ecoustics.com/bbs/messages/10381/636588.html>)



## 7.8. Use of the NTA

The usefulness of assessments has been proven by numerous studies. They are helpful in classroom and online settings, for young and adult learners, in formative and summative formats (Anderson, et al., 2005; Arter & McTighe, 2001; Simonson, et al., 2009). Formative assessment that allows the learners to monitor their performance and improve learning is deemed one of the most popular in providing them feedback (Black & Wiliam, 1998a; Cooper, 2000; Dassa, Vazquez-Abad, & Ajar, 1993; Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006; Sadler, 1989, 1998). One of the most useful formats for assessment that allows both assessment and instruction is a scoring rubric (Arter & McTighe, 2001; Ebert-May, n.d.; Mertler, 2001; Moskal, 2000; Nitko, 2004). The ability of the assessment tool to be used to judge authentic performances is considered to be crucial for the results of the learning: assessments should focus on the most important skills, knowledge and attitudes (Crooks, 1988).

Among the various studies about assessment two large groups of opinions are present. One large group are the proponents of highly reliable and assessment tool to be used by trained coders to ensure that the grades accurately reflect the actual level of the assessed competency (Moskal & Leydens, 2000; Nitko, 2004; O'Brien, 1995; Schmidt, Viswesvaran, & Ones, 2000). However another group believes that achieving high reliability and fairness of such essentially subjective instrument of professional judgment as assessment, especially assessment of complex performances, is next to impossible (Baume, et al., 2004; Dulek & Shelby, 1981; Huot, 1990; Speck, 1998). Most assessment systems were developed in the academia, with its high scholar potential. But “[t]he overall message is that the reliability of assessment in higher education is generally not high, write Baume et al. (2004, p. 457). “The catch in ‘the problem of subjectivity’ is that a professional judgment of a complex task — such as Olympic figure skating — requires personal professional judgment that is by nature subjective to some extent,” writes Speck (1998, p. 17). Looking for fairness of assessment, Speck suggests that one way to achieve it is to “decipher” the “mystery” of assessment to the students who are seeking “to quantify the unquantifiable” (p. 20). Interestingly, in this study such issues have never been raised. The trainees had the option to see what they have been assessed for, how, by how much, and why. The transparency of the assessment process — through the new teaching tools developed in this research — ensured the development of trust with the trainees.

As especially valuable they saw the option of being able to monitor own progress during the training. The opportunity to see changes in own writing performances was the second most popular element of the online training after the marked stories. The trainees approved of it as a ‘very positive moment’, ‘important part’, ‘convenient’, ‘allowed me to see how I was doing’, and ‘visualise progress or regress’.



However, assessments in the sense of grading each specific story were perceived without excitement. Two trainees did not comment. Two agreed that assessment is ‘useful’ or ‘important’. One suggested that it should take into account the time spent on writing a story. Attitudes changed substantially when the trainees received low grades. Grades which included fines for ‘inappropriate’ and ‘unacceptable’ performance were perceived with nothing less than hatred. ‘It was very cruel to be so harshly fined for the most typical mistakes we have been doing – ‘accuracy’ and ‘objectivity’<sup>120</sup> (Dina, who received 7 very low grades). ‘It was the most hated element of the training. Like the sword of Damocles. Did not allow me to feel comfortable about the training’ (Edgar, who received 3 very low grades).

The point expressed by one trainee about assessing the quality of news stories against the time it took to write them cannot be implemented for one major reason: by doing that the reason for writing news — giving people credible information which they need to make important decisions for their lives — would be compromised. There is a well-known controversy between being fast and being accurate. Being accurate is more important (Fee, n.d., Harding, 2002). However, four harsh fines as opposed to 61 other assessment weights in the 13-criteria NTA need to be addressed. Big fines were created for two reasons. The scoring was harsher in the ‘accuracy and credibility’ and the ‘objectivity as a method’ categories because these two elements are the bedrock of good journalism and creating weighty fines were one way of showing this importance. ‘Accuracy’ is considered to be the “foundation upon which everything else builds (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001, p. 43), the “bedrock of credibility” (Miller, 2002), the “journalistic Grail” (McLellan, 2001) and “the most important characteristic of any story, great or small, long or short” (Brooks, Kennedy, Moen, & Ranly, 1988, p. 21). ‘Objectivity as a method’ is “one of the hallmarks of traditional journalism” (Willis, 1991, p. 53), “strategic ritual” (Tuchman, 1972, p. 661), “routines” as “habitual, ongoing, patterned procedures that are accepted as appropriate professional practice” (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996, p. 15), “consistent method of testing information”, “transparent approach to evidence” (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001, p. 72), and “kind of industrial discipline” (Schudson, 2001, p. 162). If such statements are translated into observable performances of their opposites, then such offences as plagiarism, fabrication, making up quotes, libel, advertisement or promotion posing as news, or propaganda should have no right to exist and those who use these in news stories should face serious consequences<sup>121</sup>.

---

<sup>120</sup> Big fines were used only for two out of 13 elements of news writing – ‘accuracy and credibility’ and ‘objectivity as a method’. The ‘inappropriate’ mistakes in these elements were fined by deducting 33 points off the total score, and the ‘unacceptable’ mistakes by 67 points off the total score

<sup>121</sup> There are several known examples of firing reporters who were found guilty of plagiarism, fabrication, or making up quotes, including firing Janet Cooke from The Washington Post in 1981, Stephen Glass from The New Republic in 1998, and Jayson Blair from The New York Times in 2003.

However, the seriousness of offences that are assessed should differentiate the approach to assessment used in schools or universities where modeled performances that have no relation to social realities are assessed. In no assessment systems used in schools are fines for poor levels of performance used, and assessments used in universities also hardly recommend using negative ratings to assess bad performances.

When performance is assessed in professions that are likely to seriously influence the lives of people, then a harsher approach to unacceptable and inappropriate performances can be expected. Most assessment and performance appraisal formats that are widely used assess only average level of performance and are inapplicable to the extremes, either major mistakes or achievement. There are only a few exceptions to this rule including one used for assessing the quality of news writing by an American university journalism tutor who heavily fined his students for serious mistakes<sup>122</sup> (Speere, 2002). Although the average level of performance is, of course, an important source of information it does not convey all meaningful differences in performance across individuals or within individuals over appraisal periods” (Bernardin & Beatty, 1984, p. 103). The authors referred to the research by Kane (1981), who wrote that the rates at which people demonstrate extreme levels of performance are vital if understanding and evaluation of human performance is sought.

Examples of professional performance assessment formats which take into account very high and very low performance that can cause significant effects on human lives have not been found in available literature despite a substantial amount of research having been done into professions that involve human error, including in aviation and medicine and the well-developed discipline of performance appraisal in industrial psychology. At the same time the literature contains a considerable number of serious consequences caused by bad professional behaviours. For instance, Husch et. al, (2005) revealed that 66.9 percent of intravenous medical infusions through a particular type of pump are erroneous, can cause harm and are epidemiologically diverse, but no recommendations for performance appraisal were made. In another study to assess complex skills in anesthesia, experts in the research by Murray et. al. (2004) were asked to assess potentially egregious action by trainees in a simulation-based performance assessment by making a mark on a 10-centimeter line where 0 was the lowest, unsatisfactory, mark and 10 — outstanding, according to their perception of the trainee’s performance. So the worst mark that a student may have obtained for killing a patient would have been zero. In one aviation study (McClernon, 2003) a formula was used to assess situation awareness (a quality that is linked with human error causing air accidents), that gives negative scores to faulty performance — however, not within a performance appraisal

---

<sup>122</sup> This example was described in section 1.4.2

format, but to calculate results in a professional contest. It seems that researchers hold back from assigning corresponding negative ratings to gravely wrong performances.

Such coyness is addressed by Sutcliffe (2004), who equated human error in medicine with that in aviation, and called for the significance of faulty performance not to be downplayed by calling it “a close call” — or evidence of success and the ability to avoid disaster, while it was actually a “near miss”, a malfunction, showing how close a disaster was. “The problem with this is that organizations that see mishaps as close calls often fail to treat these events as possible warnings that signal areas of vulnerability... The capacity for learning and the accumulation of knowledge is directly affected by how potentially dangerous events are interpreted and categorized (Sutcliffe, 2004, p. 8).

Errors in journalism have also been addressed, though not evaluated scientifically and not translated in performance assessment benchmarks. For example, the *New York Times* published an extensive apology in 2003 along with extensive investigation into falsifications which the newspaper’s reporter Jayson Blair was engaged in (“Times reporter who resigned leaves long trail of deception,” 2003). Later, the newspaper published its explanations in which it admitted erroneous coverage of the pre-Iraq war events, including lack of fact-checking (“The Times and Iraq,” 2004). This coverage is largely believed to have had a major impact on the American public in its support for the war in Iraq. These examples show that though indirectly, social responsibility of journalists is high.

News consumers are not indifferent to accuracy and objectivity in journalism. The Poynter Institute of Media Studies recently posted a link to a set of printable warning labels meant to alert consumers to some of the major flaws that plague journalism (Petersen, 2010). The labels, which can be copied from the host website which also provides the original file so that anyone can translate them (Scott, 2010), are very similar to the descriptors used in the ‘unacceptable’ and ‘inappropriate’ performances that can be seen in the NTA. Compare the labels at Figure 18 and Figure 19 with the descriptors in the NTA1 ‘story contains plagiarism’ in the ‘objectivity as a method’ criterion and ‘story is written off a press release or press releases only’ in the ‘reporter’s voice’ criterion (see section 3.5.1).

**Figure 18. Label for a plagiarised article prepared by a blogger**



Figure 19. Label for a press-release posing as a news article prepared by a blogger



But apparently novice journalists, especially in a country with poor journalism culture and practices, cannot properly assess the significance of their own mistakes by juxtaposing them against local benchmarks and see no problem in publishing wrong information<sup>123</sup> That was part of the explanation of the ‘hatred’ towards assessment as an element of training.

<sup>123</sup> During the first pilot experiment one trainee published news quoting an Azeri deputy health minister as saying that 1 out of 12 people in Azerbaijan was suffering from thalassemia (a genetic disease in which the rate of synthesis of one of the globin chains that make hemoglobin was reduced, or there was no synthesis at all). This figure means that 700,000 people in the country of 8.4 million people were ill with this rare disease. I contacted the Agency and urged the relevant desk editor to correct the mistake on the website. However, it took over three weeks and several more approaches to make this correction. Such a relaxed attitude to mistakes is effectively a norm in many post-USSR countries.

The experience of this trainer, who, before training in Azerbaijan conducted 8 online training programmes in 5 countries suggests that the trainees are equally worried — or equally not worried — about different mistakes they make in news stories unless some pedagogical instrument is used in the form of giving more prominence to the elements that are more important than the others. In the first online training that I conducted in Belarus in 2000, no fines were used. And the trainees did not really worry about their inaccuracies or being unfair. In the next round of training, small fines were introduced, but they did not have any effect. Only when the magnitude of fines was made twice the size of the best possible mark did the trainees start to worry about performances that led to such punishment. That was the main reason for the decision to create big fines for bad performances in the two main elements of the NTA. Fining bad performance is not unique in pedagogy. Assigning greater negative weight to mistakes has been described in pedagogical literature as an instrument to demonstrate to the learner the importance of accuracy and the other items that an instructor wants to emphasise (Patel, et al., 2002, Speere, 2002). However, no studies with the justification of the magnitude of possible fines for bad performance were found in available literature.

The fact that assessments can be disappointing and distressing for learners is described in the literature on education and educational psychology. Bad marks often have a negative impact, particularly on low-achieving students (Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall, & Wiliam, 2004; Black & Wiliam, 1998), to the extent that some teachers stop using assessments at all or hide them from their students (ibid). In other studies, assessment was associated with powerful feelings of insecurity, guilt, anger, frustration, and a feeling of being overwhelmed (Dassa, Vazquez-Abad, & Ajar, 1993) and researchers advise taking differentiate approaches to low and high achievers (Butler, 1988). This was taken into account in this research when assessment was by default turned off for all the trainees and was turned on so that they could see it only at their request. Edgar and Dina both requested it and did not ask to turn it off even though they were frustrated because of their low marks.

In summary, there is no simple answer to what is the best assessment format. The NTA is a first-of-its-kind comprehensive system of assessment of news writing competencies, but it is definitely not the only one possible. Assessment practices could take multiple formats and instructors can incorporate assessment into their practices in their own way (Broadfoot, Osborn, Panel, & Pollard, 1996). The task is difficult. As Bloom (1968) pointed out, creating an authentic formative assessment system with “coherent theories, adequate descriptions, and firmly grounded guides to practice” is a “formidable undertaking”, and can be accompanied by “some marginal and even negative results” (p. 7). More research is needed into authentic assessments of news writing skills to make sure that teaching and training of journalism

students and professionals are indeed steering the trainees in the right direction without unnecessary stresses along the way. But until the perfect assessment format is created, the learners who participate in online training should be warned in advance about the extent of criticism that they will be facing<sup>124</sup>.

## **7.9. Applicability of western news writing standards in post-Communist countries**

One of the interesting findings of this research was the applicability of western news writing benchmarks in Azerbaijan, a representative of post-Communist countries that is still ruled by an autocracy. In fact, when the Agency approached me with the request to train its reporters, the management specifically requested that its reporters be taught western standards of news writing because the local standards were considered low. It is remarkable that in their answers to the question in the final questionnaire about the applicability of western news writing standards in Azerbaijan the trainees unanimously agreed that what they were taught during the training was not only suitable for their work, but applicable for Azeri media. The same view was expressed by the reporters who had participated in pilot experiments. However, as is clear from the answers to the second question, western news writing criteria are not practised in Azerbaijan, especially such core criteria as fairness and accuracy. Dina wrote: “Yes, they are alien. People here don’t need fair and accurate news. They enjoy one-sided news about how bad Armenians are, and then actively discuss it on forums, never noticing that the stories are one-sided. People here do not appreciate in-depth stories.”

But is this a reason not to use better standards of news reporting? What is the role of the media — keeping the public ignorant by feeding it gossip, or informing it about what is really going on by providing quality news? The fact that journalists are giving the public news a higher quality than it wants was addressed by Zaller (1999) who compared the significance of ‘quality journalism’ and ‘entertainment journalism’:

The news media provide information about a great variety of topics, from the activities of government to stock prices to tips on how to pick high quality Cabernets. Some of this content refers to matters of general social or political significance and is implicitly intended to help citizens in their role as democratic decision-makers; other information is intended primarily for purposes of entertainment or personal consumption. My notion of news quality stresses the former. Thus, I define high

---

<sup>124</sup> The introduction to the training, and the first questionnaire that the trainees had to fill in before the training clearly outlined that it would involve a lot of criticism. This issue was specified because of the prior experience of this researcher in online training and negative reactions to low assessments. Both Dina and Edgar assessed their will to face criticism and assessments as ‘4’ out of ‘5’. Therefore, their assessments were made available to them at their request.

quality news as information about matters of general political or social significance (p. 2).

Despite Dina's cynical view of the Azeri public, it is noteworthy that none of the trainees said that because of the lack of good journalism traditions in the country they did not need to implement better standards of reporting. This apparently means that they understood the advantages of their newly acquired skills.

One other reason why Anglo-American news writing standards and values were chosen to be utilised in this research, is that some decision had to be made prior to the development of the NTA and the SET about where their basis should lie. In other words, I had to establish some benchmark standards and criteria, and local standards, judging by my own experience in news reporting and training of reporters, and by the insights in literature, were too low to use as such a basis. The teaching tools, developed in this research, however, do not have to apply those values and standards uncritically. For the teaching modules of the lower level, indeed, only a basic understanding of the Anglo-American news standards and values was used because one does not teach basics by providing a lot of criticism of them. Criticism usually becomes part of teaching later, when certain basic values have already been internalised by the students and they feel ready to learn the materials of a higher order, which are part of the modules in the 'outstanding' levels of performance.

In summary, the results of this research support findings of other authors (Massey & Chang, 2002; Williams, 1987; Robie, 2001) that western standards and values of news writing are applicable in less developed countries. However, it is unclear whether other Azeri journalists, who have not been exposed to a similar type of training that the trainees undergo in this study, would draw the same conclusion. More research is also needed to understand whether what was learned became a professional skill or became diluted after the training finished in an environment that is devoid of established professional culture.

## Conclusions

In line with previous studies of news writing values by Masterton (1991; 1992a) this research explored the relative value of different news elements in news stories, but it went further by expanding the findings to create an online weighted system of assessment of news stories.

Anglo-American literature on writing news and news writing standards, values and elements were used to create the assessment system because previous research showed that it lies at the basis of news reporting in many countries including European, developing, and countries in transition. Analysis of literature demonstrated that while different types of journalism are practiced in different countries, many countries tend to accept Anglo-American standards and values in writing news.

The online weighted system to assess the quality of news texts, or NTA, was designed as a scoring rubric that consists of 13 criteria, five quality gradations in each criterion, and from a few to many descriptions of performances in each of the five quality gradations ('outstanding', 'good', 'acceptable', 'inappropriate', and 'unacceptable'). The first-of-its-kind virtual textbook, named a scoring e-textbook, or SET, was created in this research as an instructional tool to facilitate training reporters in writing news. None of the available e-books contained the option of not only instructing, but also assessing the quality of performance and its changes over time. The construction of these two tools and the method of their creation, which could be replicated to create similar tools to teach other aspects of journalism and, perhaps, similar skills in other professions and be also used in education, are the major achievements of the thesis.

Each module in the SET contains pretyped instructional text with examples and hyperlinks to similar instructional files or files with more extensive elaboration on the specific concepts that may be unknown or forgotten. The modules are coded and by these codes are connected to the relevant descriptions in the NTA, which allows the SET to perform multiple functions. The coding system connecting the NTA and the SET allows the instructor to assess and instruct at the same time by inserting codes in texts while marking stories. Such a way of marking potentially saves time on writing explanations while marking. The codes are clickable and searchable through the training website specially created for testing the new tools online.

The SET was used in an experiment to train recently hired staff reporters in Azerbaijan with very little or no previous experience in news writing, and most trainees improved the quality of their writing up to the 'acceptable' level — established as the third of the five quality levels in the NTA — during four months of workplace training from initial poor levels. It is remarkable that the Azeri trainees who participated in the experiment unanimously agreed



that western criteria of news reporting that were taught during the training are applicable in Azerbaijan and suitable for their work despite western news writing criteria not being practised in Azerbaijan's other media organisations, especially such core criteria as fairness and accuracy.

It is also noteworthy that none of the journalists said that because of the journalism traditions in the country they do not need to implement better standards of reporting. This suggests that they understood the advantages of their newly acquired skills. The findings of this research confirm findings of other authors that the main elements of western news writing are applicable in countries such as Azerbaijan, which are post-Communist countries and still ruled by an autocracy.

Testing of the training tools on Azeri journalists does not mean that the mechanism which was used to create these tools could be used only in Azerbaijan, but certainly means that the content of the instructional modules should be adapted if used in other countries. For example, instead of 'news addresses corruption and abuse of human rights issues' as one of descriptions in the 'outstanding' performance in the 'importance' criterion — topics important for post-authoritarian countries and countries with oppressive regimes — other media organisations may prefer to use 'drug abuse' or 'domestic violence', thus stimulating addressing these issues.

Among the exceptionally difficult news writing elements which were resistant to change were the language of the reporters, providing necessary explanations in the texts to make them meaningful, lack of attribution and lack of explanation of why the news is worth reading. The fact that many mistakes were repeated frequently suggests that pointing at a specific mistake by the instructor and processing a training module in the SET by the trainee is not enough for the transfer of the new chunk of knowledge into practice. Journalism, news writing included, is an ill-defined domain where assumptions conflict and rules have exceptions and multiple solutions (Kitchener, 1983; Schraw, Dunkle, & Bendixen, 1995) as opposed to turning on the light or solving a maths equation — performances functioning according to the pre-established sets of rules. Two plus two is always four, but, for instance, attributions are not always necessary, and importance of news stories often depends on how the journalist constructs and frames the news text. To present news as important, various techniques can be employed and, equally, lots of mistakes may be made along the way of learning the variety of these techniques. Learning techniques in advance may not be laying them on prepared ground. This is especially true if cultural and professional contexts work against the rules to be learned, as is the case in transitional and developing countries with poor journalism traditions. The prepared ground — and, motivation with it, is more likely to appear when the trainees see their own mistakes and understand them as mistakes because of the supplied

instruction. Therefore, repetition of the same mistake in different contexts and stories is effectively an instrument that helps the trainees to start identifying the particular problems in their various interpretations in different texts. After the mistake is identified and contextualised, there is a chance that, employing the vocabulary of cognitive load theory, it can become part of the relevant cognitive schema in the working memory, which will subsequently help reporters to identify the same situation in a new context and deal with it at the professional level. Therefore, practice is needed so that the transfer of what has been learned during the training occurs.

This theoretical construction explains well the comments by the trainees who wrote in their answers to the questionnaire that only after they see the repetition of the same mistake in different types of stories do they start to consciously work towards fixing it. Helen explained it in a conclusion to one of the training modules<sup>125</sup>: “It is difficult because there are no straightforward rules that you can apply. You need to think clearly, and know a lot, and have an analytic mind. I hope it will come with experience.”

This leads to the conclusion that because journalism is an ill-defined domain, its textbooks and teaching should not be constructed along the same lines as textbooks and teaching in well-defined domains such as mathematics or physics, if the target is to teach journalists to write news stories. For ill-defined domains chunks of knowledge are likely to become part of the long-term memory schemas that answer for the particular skills only after they are processed in various contexts and the learners are able to recognise them. Such recognition and further application can lead to automation of the new skill. However, such contextualisation of new knowledge can rarely be found in available textbooks, which tend to give just a few examples and sometimes a few exercises to practise new knowledge. Two exceptions are the textbook *Writing right for today's mass media* (Adams, 1998) which contains a workbook, and a workbook to accompany *Reporting and writing: Basics for the 21<sup>st</sup> century* (Scanlan, 2000b). The only online textbook available on the Internet, *The news manual. A professional resource for journalists and the media* (Ingram & Henshall, 2008) contains only three exercises. By comparison, the SET has over 80 exercises as parts of training modules. And it is clear, that more exercises are needed.

The trainees had different architectures of frequently repeated mistakes and the SET allowed the creation of an individualised learner-centred training environment by addressing their

---

<sup>125</sup> Conclusion for the exercise in the (111) learning module (Story has no news) given Nov. 11, 2008 ([http://nta.alterwebs.com/pages/descr.php?descr\\_id=111](http://nta.alterwebs.com/pages/descr.php?descr_id=111), access to authorised users only)

specific problems on an as-it-happened basis rather than teaching all the journalists the same information as is the case in a traditional face-to-face linear instructor-based fashion. The involvement of the instructor in working with the SET was limited only to marking and assessing the copy, and answering questions that the trainees had during their self-regulated working with instructional modules. The instructors need to initiate communication only if they spot mistakes in the completed exercises<sup>126</sup>. However, most training was conducted by the trainees in their own time and at their own pace and the SET provided them rich opportunities to self-train. Except for basic work with instructional modules, the trainees had an option to come back to their prior work, rework training exercises, read hundreds of previously marked stories, and read as many instructional files in the SET as they had time for. The trainees could also search the training website for key words.

The most valuable parts of the modules of the SET were marked stories, the opportunity to monitor own progress, exercises, the option to read colleagues' marked stories, examples, and instructional materials. Assessment was the least popular because some journalists were hurt by their low marks. Hyperlinks in the instructional materials were also unpopular for some trainees who got carried away from their initial intention to complete a certain training module.

The use of the NTA for monitoring purposes can be recommended beyond the target of its use in this research as a tool to establish the baseline level of news writing competencies before introducing some new knowledge or teaching new skills and after the programme's completion. It can be also used to follow the changes during a long-term training programme, as a checklist for subeditors, for self-assessment by journalists, peer-assessment or assessment by tutors in news writing university courses. Because the NTA, as well as outlining various mistakes in news writing abilities, contains descriptions of outstanding achievements, it is likely that it has the potential to contribute to the development of underlying behaviours such as assertiveness, inquisitiveness, creativity and the drive needed to work on socially significant stories, to come up with original story ideas or angles and to obtain good information. However, further research is needed, including with the participation of experienced reporters, to check this hypothesis.

Communication with the instructor during the online training was highly appreciated, especially communication in real time which was conducted via the instant messaging system, or ICQ.

---

<sup>126</sup> Training website automatically informs the instructor about the completed exercises so that they can be checked as soon as possible

Findings of this research also suggest that while online training by default can be used ‘anywhere, any time’, the trainees were unhappy that they were not given a special timetable with an allocated time when they could be fully engaged by training as opposed to having to squeeze their training activities into short breaks between work assignments or take training work home. An hour a day in a quiet room may be a sufficient realistic option for such training to take place.

Using the SET in the experimental training allowed to at least halve the time, needed by the instructor to mark news stories, because typical and basic mistakes were addressed only by inserting codes into the news texts for further self-regulated work by trainees. SET made it possible for the marker to focus on more important and difficult issues including suggesting other possible news angles, different intros or structures for stories, or address other issues, specific for a particular news story.

The length of online training should be defined not only by the budget constraints of the media outlet that commissions such training, but also by individual progress by the trainees. While four months of online training was sufficient time for some reporters to achieve the ‘acceptable’ level of quality of news writing, some other journalists apparently need lengthier exposure to training activities to achieve the target of the training. More research is needed to establish the time frame which may be needed to achieve the ‘good’ level of quality.

A learner-centred SET, that is easy to upgrade, enrich and adapt to any specific training or teaching situation, has the potential to become the instructional setting that may contribute to the modernisation of professional training in news reporting in the digital era.

## **Limitations of the Research**

This research has several main limitations. Firstly, only 10 news articles of different quality were analysed by top journalism experts including academics, editors, and trainers, to create the news texts assessment system, or NTA and a limited number of experts who coded these news stories for the analysis (23 experts coded each story taking from one to three hours on doing this task). More stories of different types need to be analysed to create several assessment systems that could be applied to different types of news stories.

Second, the limited number of journalists trained to test the NTA and the SET and the fact that all of them came from one country (Azerbaijan) impose limitations of the findings to transitional or developing countries.

Third, no control group was used in this research to compare the progress of the reporters with what is usually called ‘conventional experience’. This was done mainly because there is no comparative conventional experience in online long-term news writing training to comprise the content of the training of the control group (see section 2.4.4 for detailed explanations). It is to be hoped that the results of this research, in which the target was set at achieving a pre-established level of quality of news writing, may serve as a basis for comparison when new tools are tested for online training in journalism.

The NTA created as a result of this research is not a one-size-fits-all assessment system. More research is needed to create the assessment system for other than news writing purposes or for other possible text evaluation purposes including assessment of the quality of news stories in contests. The NTA has been created only as an instrument for training inexperienced journalists, but it can be also used for journalists who are retrained to be able to use modern news writing standards, or to teach journalism students. The advantages of the online NTA is not that it can give a calculation of the assessment of a news story in absolute points, but that it is consistent and can show trends in the performance of the trainees in news writing over time. The absolute points should be used with caution, because they have been created using rather a small number of experts and a selection of stories written on social issues.

The NTA also cannot evaluate all journalistic skills and traits, but only news writing skills, judging by the texts that are presented for assessment. Although indirectly some of the reporting and ethical skills are reflected in the texts, the NTA cannot directly measure honesty or integrity of journalists, their ethical treatment of sources or conflict of interests.

There are also limitations in the scoring e-textbook, or SET, another online teaching tool created as a result of this research. It is not an ultimate teaching tool as no textbook can ever be. However, technologically, it has a better potential than any paper-based textbook to be

upgraded on an as-needed basis and become the most comprehensive e-textbook that could teach and train journalists from novice to mastery levels. More work needs to be done to upgrade the SET, that now contains about 700 training modules including instructional materials, exercises, examples and other training opportunities, to include more and richer instructional materials than it has now, and append it with audio and video materials to cater for various learning styles on the condition that they do not create extraneous cognitive load for the trainees.

Another limitation of SET is that it is not a universal tool to be used in any country: as any other textbook it has been prepared for a specific audience and to be used in other countries and cultures it needs to be upgraded with local examples and other major elements and subtleties in which local news journalism may differ from the Anglo-American model of journalism used as the basis of the SET.

Just as the NTA cannot be used to evaluate professional qualities that journalists need for their work but only to assess news writing competencies judging by the quality of texts, SET equally can teach a large number of the specific techniques helpful in news writing. However, more research is needed to find out whether it can develop other journalistic skills and change the trainees' personal characteristics, which, according to Franklin (2007) include an interest in current affairs at all levels<sup>127</sup>, interest in people, events and places, a willingness to accept irregular hours, an ability to work under pressure to meet deadlines, determination and persistence.

Because the SET was tested in the experiment with the participation of inexperienced reporters and the number of the trainees in the training group was relatively small, the results, that showed progress of most reporters from poor levels of writing quality to an acceptable level cannot be generalised to reporters with more experience who need improvement, or on reporters who need to re-train from their previous experiences, which is often the case in transitional and developing countries. The experience of this reporter shows that online training is effective in both cases, but more research is needed to show the extents to which news writing competencies may be improved and the length of the training that is needed to achieve various targets. This research gives a tool for assessment which would be helpful to measure progress and achievements.

The results of this research are also not shown in the larger picture of assessment of the impact of training programmes on the development of civic society, democratisation and economic development in the country. Establishing the linkage between the impact of media

---

<sup>127</sup> At least one trainee, Helen, mentioned as the most important skill acquired as a result of the training learning "to follow political news and understand political processes"

assistance programmes and important changes in the society is deemed “imperative” by Becker & Vlad, (2005, p. 21) to assess the effectiveness of media assistance efforts.

Despite these limitations, this research should be acknowledged as taking a few steps towards widening the options available to newsrooms with limited budgets which are looking forward to convert from poor to better standards of news writing. The design of the online training described in this research may be also used as a basis for the non-stop learning newsroom, which is a modern trend of media organisations that are willing to keep up with contemporary challenges.

### Directions for Future Research

Several issues which this study touched upon need more extensive and rigorous research. First, the issue of whether all western standards of news writing are applicable for use by journalists from transitional and developing countries remains open to discussion despite journalists in this research unanimously agreed on their applicability. More research is needed to identify the extent to which, for instance, the watchdog function of news media can be and should be implemented in societies in which the regime remains oppressive. This concerns such elements of news writing as ‘reporter’s voice’ which is assessed in this research as the ability to choose interesting and important angles for news stories. So far, most news stories are written from public events and many are based on utterances by officials. The research is needed to find out how to change this tendency into finding story focuses that are more important for the public. The question is also open whether this could be taught online.

The tools described in this research can be substantially improved by academics and practitioners with sufficient resources. The NTA can be further refined by adding more data, refining their elements, testing other ways of weighting the NTA, and creating more specific versions of the NTA to assess the quality of different types of news genres, for instance, news analysis, news features, business news, sport news, soft news or other types of news.

Research may be done to find out whether intrinsic motivation of the trainees could be boosted by adding bonus points for achieving the ‘outstanding’ level of performance. The SET can also be improved by adding more various training materials including tests to measure the level of understanding of the new material and make relevant improvements to the training modules. This research suggests one of the possible mechanisms of how this could be done.

The improvement of the tools created in this research may also take other directions, for instance: refining the elements of the suggested tools on the basis of more rigorous research; improving the instructional design of online training by creating an additional feature that can

help the trainees to choose the instruction in the order of increasing complexity rather than using training modules horizontally as in the design used in this research; or adding more interactivity to the training elements within the limits imposed by the danger of increasing extraneous cognitive load for the trainees.



## Concluding remarks

“Writing is easy. All you do is sit down at a typewriter and open a vein” (Red Smith, the NYT sportswriter).

This oft-quoted phrase says it all about how complex and emotionally draining journalistic writing is when it is taken seriously. Journalists in transitional countries often come from the streets — like the trainees who participated in the experiment in this research — believing that if they can physically hold a pen and write, or type on the computer, they can write for the press. Judging by the standards of news media in some post-USSR countries, this could be the case. They rarely get training in their offices. But some media organisations at some stage understand that to be in business, they need training. Such was the case with this research. The management of the Agency in Azerbaijan that invited this researcher to conduct online training was ambitious enough and understood that training may make the difference in the quality of its work. During the almost two years that this researcher was conducting two pilots and then the main experiment, the Agency was twice recognised as the best in the country. Part of this success, according to the management, was due to the increased level of quality of news writing of its journalists.

The online training in Azerbaijan was not anything that started from scratch. This training, for research reasons organised as action research, was based on a large foundation of original work that included previous experience of this researcher in training journalists in post-USSR countries, analysis of literature and field work. The NTA, SET, and online training design stemmed from a decade of previous online training work. From 1998 to 2006 I conducted over 30 workshops and office training programmes (from 3 days to two weeks long) and 8 long-term (4-6 months) training programmes for editors and reporters of Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Ukraine, Russia, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, and in the Russian regions of Ingushetia, Chechnya and North Ossetia teaching them writing news, features, and investigative reporting. These programmes were funded by Washington-based IREX Pro-Media, Internews, Eurasia and London-based IWPR (Institute for War and Peace Reporting). This experience allowed a prototype of the NTA to be created as a simple yes-no system of clicking a pretyped checklist-type online-based assessment system of news writing quality. The system grew over the years to cover more than 190 elements. Even though this system lacked content, it became too laborious.

During this project, academic literature on assessment in pedagogy and psychology was analysed along with scores of journalism textbooks to prepare a much handier assessment system where various patterns of news writing of varying quality were classed in a 30-criterion scoring rubric format and allocated five levels of quality. This rubric was tested by

top journalism experts — trainers, editors, and academics — who applied it for scoring several specially selected news articles. After correlation and factor analyses were applied, it was possible to shorten the rubric to 13 criteria which was labelled NTA. It was then tested in two pilot experiments during which a set of over 700 instructional modules were prepared in connection with the various descriptors that the NTA consisted of. Over 500 news articles filed for the pilot experiments were analysed and various deficiencies of these articles were used to create the content of the instructional modules. Each module contained instructional texts each about one page long, examples and hyperlinks to other modules. The most difficult texts had exercises to practise the knowledge and some had multi-choice quizzes. All the modules were linked by codes to the NTA, allowing them to be used not only for instruction, but also for assessment. The construct was labelled scoring e-textbook, or SET.

The SET was then used in a long-term experiment with working journalists. Over 60 articles were filed for full assessment and marking with the help of SET, while some journalists filed a lot more for casual checking or consultation. Clickable codes were used to indicate mistakes, and after reading the marked copy, journalists engaged in self-regulated learning with the help of SET. Synchronous and asynchronous communication with the instructor was part of the online training, too.

This research in no way sets final standards in online training in news writing. It is only a first step in this direction and will need a lot of improvement.

Consider: After centuries of pedagogic practice and research, in 1998 Wiggins, the author of a much-cited book on educative assessment wrote, that there exists "no agreement on what constitutes required work worth mastering, despite the fact that we have clear guidelines for what schools should teach" (Wiggins, 1998, p. 110). If schools with centuries of practice and an established body of research still cannot agree on what is worth mastering, such an ill-defined domain as journalism with its nearly daily debates on ethical and other professional issues that come up every time some news report stirs controversy, may never get firmly established guidelines on the benchmarks of various performances. Much more research is needed to come up with the assessment benchmarks that journalism experts will agree on.

Among the advantages of the online course, which have not been studied in this research, but which may be considered when making a choice of the training platform, are relatively low costs of online training compared to the cost of keeping a consultant in the media organisation's office for the time needed for the knowledge transfer to take place. In addition, the constant presence of the instructor is not needed even when the online course is up and running because most of the learning is self-regulated and self-paced. Help can be given on demand when the trainee asks specific questions. Incorporating video communication

software, for instance, such as Skype in the range of interaction techniques may allow even better virtual presence of the instructor than ICQ used in this research.

This research does not pretend to present the best possible way of long-term online training or claim that the suggested tools constitute the only way to change the news writing skills of novice reporters for the better. But as a possible version of such training this study makes a moderate contribution to the practice and theory of journalism training.

In conclusion, despite opening up a vein before writing news always being helpful to sharpen the mind, this research suggests much less bloody ways to improve the quality of news writing. Tools approved in this research may be part of the long-term solution in the modern digital era.

## REFERENCES

- Abubakar, A. B., Harande, Y. I., & Abubakar, B. M. (2009, Oct. 29-30). *E-learning in Malaysia and Nigeria: A bibliometric study*. Paper presented at the 8th European Conference on e-learning, University of Bari, Italy.
- Adams, P. (1998). *Writing right for today's mass media: a textbook and workbook with language exercises*. Chicago: Nelson-Hall Publishers.
- Advanced news writing Retrieved June 10, 201-, from <http://contentetc.com/advanced-news-writing-course>
- Aiken, L. R. (1996). *Rating scales and checklists: evaluating behavior, personality, and attitudes*. New York; Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.
- Aitchison, J. (1988). *Writing for the press*. London: Century Hutchinson Ltd.
- Akgun, A. E., Byrne, J. C., Lynn, G. S., & Keskin, H. (2007). Organizational unlearning as changes in beliefs and routines in organizations. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 20(6), 794-812.
- Allen, D., & Tanner, K. (2006). Rubrics: tools for making learning goals and evaluation criteria explicit for both teachers and learners. *CBE—Life Sciences Education*, 5, 197-203.
- Ally, M. (2008). Foundations of educational theory for online learning. In T. Anderson (Ed.), *The theory and practice of online learning* (2nd ed. ed., pp. 15-44). Edmonton: AU Press.
- Altschull, J. H. (1990). *From Milton to McLuhan: the ideas behind American journalism*. New York: Longman.
- And now, the counterfeit news (2005). Retrieved March 16, 2005, from <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/03/16/opinion/16wed1.html?scp=1&sq=%22counterfe>  
[it%20news%22&st=cse](http://www.nytimes.com/2005/03/16/opinion/16wed1.html?scp=1&sq=%22counterfe)
- Anderson, H., Guadalupe, A., Bird, E., & Moore, D. (2005). A review of educational assessment. *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education*, 69(1), 84-100.
- Anderson, J., & Adams, M. (1992). Acknowledging the learning styles of diverse student populations: Implications for instructional design. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, 49(1), 19-33.
- Anderson, J., Reder, L., & Simon, H. (1996). *Applications and misconceptions of cognitive psychology to mathematics*. Pittsburgh, USA: Carnegie Mellon University.
- Anderson, R. (1998). Why talk about different ways to grade? The shift from traditional assessment to alternative assessment. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*(74), 5-16.
- Andrade, H., & Du, Y. (2005). Student perspectives on rubric-referenced assessment. *Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation*, 10(3), 1-11. Retrieved from <http://pareonline.net/pdf/v10n3.pdf>
- Ansley, B. (2003). Occupied territory. *New Zealand Listener* 34.
- AP reminds staff about policy (2005). Retrieved Jan. 31, 2010, from <http://www.apme.com/committees/credibility/061705apletter.shtml>
- Aren't I entitled to an opinion and a life?* (2006, June 15-16). Paper presented at the Our Readers are Watching, Blair, Neb.
- Arnold, C., & Cook, T. (2010). *The inverted pyramid structure*. Retrieved Feb. 20, 2010, from <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/735/04/>
- Arrietta-Walden, M. (2005). To err is human, to correct errors is newspaper's duty Retrieved Sept. 15, 2009, from [http://www.eduteach.org/special/editingthefuture/07\\_Holt/handouts/OregonianAccuracyColumn.pdf](http://www.eduteach.org/special/editingthefuture/07_Holt/handouts/OregonianAccuracyColumn.pdf)

- Arter, J. A., & McTighe, J. (2001). *Scoring rubrics in the classroom: using performance criteria for assessing and improving student performance*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.; London: Corwin Press.
- Association e-learning: state of the sector (2009). Retrieved May 18, 2010, from <http://www.tagoras.com/catalog/association-elearning/>
- Astin, A. W. (1991). *Assessment for excellence: the philosophy and practice of assessment and evaluation in higher education*. New York: American Council on Education: Macmillan; Toronto: Collier Macmillan; New York: Maxwell Macmillan.
- Azerbaijan (2010). Retrieved Aug. 15, 2010, from <http://en.rsrf.org/report-azerbaijan,91.html>
- Azmi, F. T. (2008). Mapping the learn-unlearn-relearn model; Imperatives for strategic management. *European Business Review*, 20(3), 240-259.
- Baker, B. (2002). *Newsthinking: the secret of making your facts fall into place*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Barboux, M.-T. (2006). *From lifelong learning to m-learning*. Paper presented at the 13th International Conference ALT-C 2006: The next generation, Edinburgh, Scotland, UK.
- Barker, P. (2005). What is IEEE Learning Object Metadata / IMS Learning Resource Metadata?, November 30, 2007, from <http://metadata.cetis.ac.uk/guides/WhatIsLOM.pdf>
- Bates, S. (1995). *Realigning journalism with democracy: the Hutchins Commission, its times, and ours*. Washington, D.C. (1455 Pa. Ave., N.W., Suite 200, Washington 20004-1008): Annenberg Washington Program Communications Policy Studies Northwestern University.
- Baume, D., Yorke, M., & Coffey, M. (2004). What is happening when we assess, and how can we use our understanding of this to improve assessment? *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 29(4), 451-477.
- Becker, H. (1967). Whose side are we on? *Social Problems*, 14(3), 239-247.
- Becker, L. B., & Vlad, T. (2005). *Non-U.S. Funders of Media Assistance Projects*. Retrieved Feb. 17, 2011, from [http://www.grady.uga.edu/coxcenter/Activities/Act\\_2005\\_to\\_2006/Materials05-06/Knight\\_International\\_Report\\_December\\_2005\\_v16.pdf](http://www.grady.uga.edu/coxcenter/Activities/Act_2005_to_2006/Materials05-06/Knight_International_Report_December_2005_v16.pdf)
- Becoming a more effective reporter: Telling untold stories (2009). Retrieved Sept. 1, 2009, from [http://www.newsu.org/courses/course\\_detail.aspx?id=nwsu\\_rac09b](http://www.newsu.org/courses/course_detail.aspx?id=nwsu_rac09b)
- Belarus (2010). Retrieved Aug. 15, 2010, from <http://en.rsrf.org/report-belarus,93.html>
- Belt, T., & Just, M. (2008). The local news story: is quality a choice? *Political Communication*, 25(2), 194-215.
- Bender, T. (2003). *Discussion-based online teaching to enhance student learning: theory, practice, and assessment*. Sterling, Va.: Stylus Pub.
- Benkard, C. L. (2000). Learning and forgetting: The dynamics of aircraft production. *The American Economic Review*, 90(4), 1034-1054.
- Bennett, P. (2005). Washington Post editor comments on survey Retrieved Jan. 31, 2010, from <http://www.apme.com/committees/credibility/052705bennett.shtml>
- Berger, G. (2001). It's the training that did it. A primer for media trainers to assess their impact Retrieved Aug. 27, 2009, from <http://eprints.ru.ac.za/833/01/training.pdf>
- Berglez, P. (2008). What is global journalism. *Journalism Studies*, 9(6), 845-858.
- Berkowitz, D. (2006, July 27). *Is all the news ours? Political violence, September 11, and the war on Iraq*. Paper presented at the IAMCR conference, Cairo.
- Berkowitz, D. A. (1997). *Social meanings of news: a text-reader*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications.
- Bernardin, H. J., & Beatty, R. W. (1984). *Performance appraisal: assessing human behavior at work*. Boston, Ma: Kent Pub. Co.
- Beswick, G., Rothblum, E., & Mann, L. (1988). Psychological antecedents of student procrastination. *Australian Psychologist*, 23(2), 207-217.

- Bezanson, R. (1998). The atomization of the newspaper: technology, economics and the coming transformation of editorial judgment about news. *Communication Law and Policy*, 3(2), 175-230.
- Bickler, C., Borden, A., Chazan, Y., Davis, A., Jukes, S., MacLeod, J., et al. (2004). *Reporting for change: A handbook for local journalists in crisis areas*. London: Institute for War & Peace Reporting.
- Black, J. (1977, Aug. 21-27). *Another perspective on mass media propaganda*. Paper presented at the Annual convention of the Association for Education in Journalism Madison, Wisconsin.
- Black, P., Harrison, C., Lee, C., Marshall, B., & Wiliam, D. (2004). Working inside the black box: assessment for learning in the classroom. *Phi Delta Kappan*(86), 1.
- Black, P., & Wiliam, D. (1998). Inside the black box. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 80(2), 139-148.
- Black, P., & William, D. (1998). Assessment and classroom learning. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy&Practice*, 5(1), 7-68.
- Blake, K. (n.d.). Understanding the news values Retrieved 19 June, 2009
- Block, J. (1978). Standards and criteria: a response. *Journal of Educational Measurement*, 15(4), 291-295.
- Bloom, B. S. (1968). Mastery learning *Evaluation comment* (pp. 1-11): Center for the Study of Evaluation of Instructional Programs.
- Bodle, J. (1996). Assessing news quality: a comparison between community and student daily newspapers. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 73(3), 672-686.
- Bolton, R. (2006). Mind your language. *British Journalism Review*, 17(2), 44-49.
- Bonk, C. J. (2002). Online training in an online world Retrieved May 10, 2008
- Boorstin, D. J. (1987). *The image: a guide to pseudo-events in America* (25th anniversary ed. ed.). New York: Atheneum.
- Bostic, T. J., Rubio, D. M., & Hood, M. (2000). A validation of the subjective vitality scale using structural equation modeling. *Social Indicators Research*, 52(3), 313-324.
- Botes, J. (1996). Journalism and conflict resolution. *Media Development*, 4, 6-9.
- Boud, D. (1995). Assessment and learning: contradictory or complementary. In P. Knight (Ed.), *Assessment for learning in higher education* (pp. 35-48). London: Kogan Page Limited.
- Boudana, S. (2010). On the values guiding the French practice of journalism: interviews with thirteen was correspondents. *Journalism*, 11(3), 293-310.
- Boyd-Barrett, O. (2008). News Agencies in the Era of the Internet. *Media Asia*, 35(3), 163-169.
- Boyer, J. (1981). How editors view objectivity. *Journalism Quarterly*, 58(1), 24-28.
- Braman, S., & Sreberny-Mohammadi, A. (1996). *Globalization, communication, and transnational civil society*. Cresskill, N.J.: Hampton Press.
- Bransford, J. D., Brown, A. L., & Cocking, R. R. (1999). *How people learn: brain, mind, experience, and school*. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press.
- Brennen, B. (2000). What the hacks say: The ideological prism of US journalism text. *Journalism*, 1(1), 106-113.
- Brennen, B., & Duffy, M. (2003). "If a problem cannot be solved, enlarge it": an ideological critique of the "other" in Pearl Harbor and September 11 New York Times coverage. *Journalism Studies*, 4(1), 3-14.
- Bridges, J. A., & Bridges, L. W. (1997). Changes in news use on the front pages of the American daily newspaper, 1986-1993. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, pp. 826-838.
- Briggs, M. (2007). Journalism 2.0. How to survive and thrive. A digital literacy guide for the information age Retrieved May 30, 2009, from [http://www.j-lab.org/Journalism\\_20.pdf](http://www.j-lab.org/Journalism_20.pdf)
- Brigley, S., Hosein, I., & Myemba, I. (2006). Bridging the divide: sustainability and relevance of a distance learning module for clinical officers in Tanzania. *Open Learning*, 21(1), 49-58.

- Brinko, K. T. (1993). The practice of giving feedback to improve teaching. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 64(5), 574-593.
- Broadfoot, P., Osborn, M., Panel, C., & Pollard, A. (1996). Assessment in French primary schools. *Curriculum Journal*, 7(3), 227-246.
- Bromley, M., & Stephenson, H. (1998). *Sex, lies and democracy: the press and the public*. Harlow and New York: Addison Wesley Longman.
- Brooker-Gross, S. (1981). Timeliness: Interpretations from a sample of the 19th century newspapers. *Journalism Quarterly*, 58(4), 594-598.
- Brookhart, S. M. (1999). *The art and science of classroom assessment: The missing part of pedagogy. ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report (Vol. 27, No. 1)*. Washington, DC: The George Washington University, Graduate School of Education and Human Development.
- Brooks, B. S., Kennedy, G., Moen, D., & Ranly, D. (1988). *News reporting and writing* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, Inc.
- Brooks, J. G., & Brooks, M. G. (1993). *In search of understanding: the case for constructivist classrooms*. Alexandria, Va.: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Brown, H. (1987). *Observation and Objectivity*. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Brown, S. F., & Knight, P. (1994). *Assessing learners in higher education*. London: Kogan Page.
- Brugger, D. (2004). *Context – all out*. Retrieved Oct. 24, 2009, from <http://www.poynter.org/column.asp?id=36&aid=61529>
- Bunz, M. (2009). *How social networking is changing journalism*. Retrieved Oct. 5, 2009, from <http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/pda/2009/sep/18/oxford-social-media-convention-2009-journalism-blogs>
- Burdick, S. (2010). Getting e-learning right Retrieved June 1, 2010, from <https://www.learningsolutionsmag.com/articles/462/getting-e-learning-right-/pageall>
- Burns, L. S. (2002). *Understanding journalism*. London: SAGE.
- Buruma, I. (2006, Sept. 17). Theater of War. *The New York Times*. from [http://www.nytimes.com/2006/09/17/books/review/Buruma.t.html?\\_r=1&ex=1162094400&en=3039e6ef441378b6&ei=5070](http://www.nytimes.com/2006/09/17/books/review/Buruma.t.html?_r=1&ex=1162094400&en=3039e6ef441378b6&ei=5070).
- Butler, R. (1988). Enhancing and undermining intrinsic motivation; the effects of task-involving and ego-envolving evaluation on interest and performance. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 58(1), 1-14.
- Buttry, S. (2005, December 20, 2005). Make Stories Relevant to Readers. *No train, no gain. Reporting resources* Retrieved Feb. 20, 2006, from <http://www.notrain-nogain.com/Train/Res/Report/relev.asp>
- Calame, B. (2005, Nov. 20). *Anonymity: Who deserves it?*, from <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/11/20/opinion/20publiceditor.html?ei=5070&en=a1b7cd5577a663cd&ex=1133931600>
- Cameron, R. (1999). Teaching newswriting online, from <http://www.rcameron.com/articles/online/index.html>
- Cappon, R. J., & Press, A. (2000). *The Associated Press guide to news writing* (3rd ed.). Forest City, CA: IDG Books Worldwide.
- Cardno, C. E. M., & New Zealand Council for Educational Research. (2003). *Action research : a developmental approach*. Wellington [N.Z.]: New Zealand Council for Educational Research.
- Carless, D., Joughin, G., & Mok, M. M. C. (2006). Learning-oriented assessment: principles and practice. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 31(4), 395-398.
- Carmody, D. (1991, June, 21). Do speakers really say what is between quotation marks? *The New York Times*, p. 12.
- Carr, S. (2000). A distance education comes of age, the challenge is keeping the students. *Chronicle of Higher Education* 46(23), A39-A41.

- Case, S. (2007). Reconfiguring and realigning the assessment feedback processes for an undergraduate criminology degree. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 32(3), 285-299.
- Cenite, M., Yee, C. S., Juan, H. T., Qin, L. L., & Lin, T. X. (2008). Perpetual development journalism? Balance and framing in the 2006 Singapore election coverage. *Asian Journal of Communication*, 18(3), 280-295.
- Chandler, P., & Sweller, J. (1992). The split-attention effect as a factor in the design of instruction. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 62(2), 233-246.
- Chang, V., & Guetl, C. (2007). *E-Learning Ecosystem (ELES) – A holistic approach for the development of more effective learning environment for small-to-medium sized enterprises (SMEs)* Paper presented at the Inaugural IEEE International Digital Ecosystems Technologies Conference, Cairns, Australia.
- Charteris, J., & Christchurch College of Education. Teacher Qualifications Centre. (2001). *Creating meaningful and motivational learning opportunities : information and communication technologies and teaching style : an action research assignment at Lytton High School submitted as partial fulfilment for the Diploma in Information Technology in Education at Christchurch College of Education.*
- Chaudhary, A. (1974). Comparative news judgment of Indian and American journalists. *International Communication Gazette*, 20(4), 233-248.
- Chellman, A. A. C. (2000, Aug). Distance Education: A Reflective Action Research Project and Its Systemic Implications for Higher Education. *Systemic Practice and Action Research*, pp. 587-612.
- Chicago Tribune error policy (2003). Retrieved Sept. 13, 2009, from [http://www.eduteach.org/special/editingthefuture/07\\_Holt/handouts/ChicagoTribuneErrorPolicy.pdf](http://www.eduteach.org/special/editingthefuture/07_Holt/handouts/ChicagoTribuneErrorPolicy.pdf)
- Christensen, C. (2003). *The innovator's dilemma*. New York, NY: Harper Collins.
- Chrysostomou, C., & Papadopoulos, G. (2005). *An evaluation of e-learning technologies and trends: Establishing an object-oriented approach to learning object design and development*. Paper presented at the EBEL 2005 International Conference on e-Business and e-Learning, Grenoble, France.
- Clark, R. P. (1994). Media will never influence learning. *Educational Technology Research and Development*, 42(2), 21-29.
- Clark, R. P. (2006). *Writing tools: 50 essential strategies for every writer* (1st ed.). New York: Little Brown and Co.
- Clark, R. P. (2010). *What J.D. Salinger taught me about literary use of the f-word*. Retrieved June 20, 2010
- Clausen, L. (2004). Localizing the global: 'Domestication' processes in international news production. *Media, Culture & Society*, 25-44.
- Clayman, S. E., & Reisner, A. (1998). Gatekeeping in action: editorial conferences and assessments of newsworthiness. *American Sociological Review*, 63, 178-199.
- Cobden, M., Adam, G. S., Holm, H.-H., & Abu-Fadil, M. (2007). *Model curricula for journalism education for developing countries & emerging democracies*: UNESCO.
- Cohen, A., Levy, M., Roch, I., & Gurevitch, M. (1996). *Global newsrooms. Local audiences. A study of the Eurovision news exchange*. London: Libbey.
- Cohen, J. (2001). Symposium: Journalism and mass communication education at the crossroads. *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator*, 56(3), 4-27.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2007). *Research methods in education* (6th ed.). London; New York: Routledge.
- Cole, N. (2006). How long should a training program be? A field study of "rules-of-thumb". *Journal of Workplace Learning*, 20(1), 54-70.
- Conrad, P. (1999). Uses of expertise: sources, quotes, and voice in the reporting of genetics in the news. *Public Understanding of Science*, 8(4), 258-303.
- Cooper, G. (1998). Research into cognitive load theory and instructional design at UNSW. Retrieved Feb.1, 2008: <http://education.arts.unsw.edu.au/staff/sweller/clt/index.html>



- Cooper, K. (2006). Generating Business Results with m-Learning *Briefings*, December 3, 2007, from [http://www.ej4.com/casestudy/ej4\\_m-Learning.pdf](http://www.ej4.com/casestudy/ej4_m-Learning.pdf)
- Cooper, N. J. (2000, Sep). Facilitating learning from formative feedback in level 3 assessment. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 279-291.
- Cooper, N. J. (2000). Facilitating learning from formative feedback in level 3 assessment. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 25(3), 279-291.
- Coulson, D., Cyr, C., Lacy, S. (2000). City hall reporters' evaluation of coverage. *Newspaper Research Journal*, 21(3), 27-38.
- Costera Meijer, I. (2003). What is quality television news? A plea for extending the professional repertoire of newsmakers. *Journalism Studies*, 4(1), 15-29.
- Craig, D. (2003). The promise and peril of anecdotes in news coverage: an ethical analysis. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 80(4), 802-817.
- Crawford, C. (2001). *Rubrics: models of evaluation within a constructivist learning environments*. Paper presented at the Annual National Council of Teachers of English from <http://eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED462910.pdf>
- Creating and editing your rubric (n.d.). from <http://rubistar.4teachers.org/>
- Creating and using rubrics for student assignments. from <http://tlc.ucalgary.ca/resources/library/itbl/rubrics-for-student-assignments/rubrics-for-student-assignments.pdf>
- Crooks, T. J. (1988). The Impact of Classroom Evaluation Practices on Students. *Review of Educational Research*, 58(3), 438-481.
- Danzger, M. H. (1975). Validating conflict data. *American Sociological Review*, 40(October), 570-584.
- Dash, A. (2002). Introducing the microcontent client, December 3, 2007, from [http://www.anildash.com/magazine/2002/11/introducing\\_the.html](http://www.anildash.com/magazine/2002/11/introducing_the.html)
- Dassa, C., Vazquez-Abad, J., & Ajar, D. (1993). Formative assessment in a classroom setting: from practice to computer innovations. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, 39(2), 116-129.
- Davis, F., Bagozzi, R., & Warshaw, P. (1989). User acceptance of computer technology: a comparison of two theoretical models. *Management Science*, 35(4), 982-1003.
- de Burgh, H. (2005). Introduction: journalism and the new cultural paradigm. In H. de Burgh (Ed.), *Making journalists* (pp. 1-21). New York: Routledge.
- Dearing, J. (1995). Newspaper coverage of maverick science: Creating controversy through balancing. *Public Understanding of Science*, 4(2), 341-361.
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2002). Overview of self-determination theory: and organismic dialectical perspective. In E. L. Deci & R. M. Ryan (Eds.), *Handbook of self-determination research* (pp. 3-33). Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press.
- DeFleur, M. L., & Dennis, E. E. (2002). *Understanding mass communication: a liberal arts perspective* (7th ed. ed.). Boston, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin; [London: Hi Marketing] [distributor].
- Delandshere, G., & Petrosky, A. (1998). Assessment of complex performances: Limitations of key measurement assumptions. *Educational Researcher*, 27(2), 14-24.
- Delfino, M., & Persico, D. (2007). Online or face-to-face? Experimenting with different techniques in teacher training. *Journal of Computer-Assisted Learning*, 23(5), 351-365.
- Denton, P. (2003). *Evaluation of the 'Electronic Feedback' marking assistant and analysis of a novel collusion detection facility*. Paper presented at the 7th International Computer Assisted Assessment Conference, Loughborough, U.K.
- Dereshiwsky, M. (2001). "A" is for assessment: Identifying online assessment practices and perceptions. *Education at a Distance*, 15(10)
- Desai, N., Pineda, A., Runquist, M., & Fusunyan, M. (2010). Torture at Times: waterboarding in the media Retrieved July 7, 2010, from [http://www.hks.harvard.edu/presspol/publications/papers/torture\\_at\\_times\\_hks\\_students.pdf](http://www.hks.harvard.edu/presspol/publications/papers/torture_at_times_hks_students.pdf)

- DeStefano, D., & LiFevre, J. (2007). Cognitive load in hypertext reading: a review. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 23, 1616-1641.
- Deuze, M. (2006). Global journalism education. *Journalism Studies*, 7(1), 19-34.
- DeVellis, R. F. (1991). *Scale development : theory and applications*. Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage.
- Dewey, J. (1969). *Experience and Education*. London: Collier books.
- Dewey, J. (1979). *The quest for certainty: a study of the relation of knowledge and action*: Paragon Book.
- Dimitrova, D., & Strömbäck, J. (2009). Look who's talking. Use of sources in newspaper coverage in Sweden and the United States. *Journalism Practice*, 3(1), 75-91.
- Disayawattana, S. (1996). Social and cultural influences. In M. Masterson (Ed.), *Asian values in journalism* (pp. 55-58). Singapore: Asian Media, Information and Communication Centre.
- Donsbach, W. (2009). Journalists and their professional identities. In S. Allan (Ed.), *The Routledge companion to news and journalism studies*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Donsbach, W., & Klett, B. (1993). Subjective objectivity: How journalists in four countries define a key term of their profession. *Gazette*, 51, 53-83.
- Dornisch, M. M., & McLoughlin, A. (2006). Limitations of web-based rubric resources: Addressing the challenges. *Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation*, 11(3), 1-8.
- Downes, S. (2005). E-Learning 2.0 Retrieved Oct. 8, 2007, from [http://www.cmb.ac.lk/newsletter/ext\\_pages/Vlc/E-learning%202.pdf](http://www.cmb.ac.lk/newsletter/ext_pages/Vlc/E-learning%202.pdf)
- Downey, L., & Kaiser, R. (2003). *The news about the news: American journalism in peril*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Dulek, R., & Shelby, A. (1981). Varying evaluative criteria: a factor in differential grading. *The Journal of Business Communication*, 18(2), 41-50.
- Dziuban, C. D., Hartman, J., Juge, F., Moskal, P., & Sorg, D. (2005). Blended learning enters the mainstream. In C. J. Bonk & C. Graham (Eds.), *Handbook of blended learning: global perspectives, local designs*. San Francisco, CA: Pfeiffer Publishing.
- Ebert-May, D. (n.d.). Scoring rubrics, from <http://www.wcer.wisc.edu/archive/cl1/flag/cat/catframe.htm>
- Editorial guidelines. Impartiality & diversity of opinion (2005). Retrieved July 15, 2010, from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/guidelines/editorialguidelines/edguide/impartiality/index.shtml>
- Eerde, W. V. (2003). Procrastination at work and time management training. *The Journal of Psychology*, 137(5), 421-434.
- Elliott, D. (1986). *Responsible journalism*. Beverly Hills; London: Sage.
- Ellis, A., & Knaus, W. J. (1977). *Overcoming procrastination: or how to think and act rationally in spite of life's inevitable hassles*. NY: Institute for Rational Living.
- Elton, L., & Johnston, B. (2002). *Assessment in Universities: A Critical Review of Research*. York: Learning and Teaching Support Network.
- Emerging journalism (2007, Sept. 15). *The Economist*, 384, 75-75.
- Emery, E. (1962). *The Press in America* (2nd ed.). Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-hall, Inc.
- Errico, M. (1997). The evolution of the summary news lead. *Media History Monographs - On Line Journal of Media History* Retrieved May 13, 2009, from <http://www.scripps.ohiou.edu/mediahistory/mhmjour1-1.htm>
- Erwin, T. D. (1991). *Assessing student learning and development: a guide to the principles, goals, and methods of determining college outcomes*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Evans, H. (1972). *Newsman's English* (1st ed. Vol. book one). London, Melbourne, Toronto, Johannesburg, Auckland: William Heinemann Ltd.
- Fakazis, E. (2006). Constructing boundaries of journalism. *Journalism*, 7(1), 5-24.
- Fedler, F. (2005, Aug. 10-13). *Plagiarism persists despite journalists' changing attitudes*. Paper presented at the National convention of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, San Antonio, TX.
- Fedler, F., Bender, J. R., Davenport, L., & Drager, M. (2005). *Reporting for the media* (8th ed. ed.). New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Fee, F. (n.d.). 44 Tips for greater accuracy Retrieved March 20, 2006, from <http://www.unc.edu/%7Efee/teaching/accuracy.htm>
- Ferguson, J., & DeFelice, A. (2010). Length of online course and student satisfaction, perceived learning, and academic performance. *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning*, 11(2), 74-84.
- Ferrell, J. (2004). *Cultural criminology unleashed*. London, Portland, Or.: GlassHouse; Cavendish Pub.
- Fico, F., & Cote, W. (1999). Fairness and balance in the structural characteristics of newspaper stories on the 1996 presidential election. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 76(1), 124-137.
- Field, A. P. (2005). *Discovering statistics using SPSS: (and sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll)* (2nd ed.). London; Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications.
- Fink, C. C. (1996). *Strategic newspaper management*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Fish, S. (1980). *Is there a text in this class?* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Fisher, M. (2000). Implementation considerations for instructional design of web-based learning environments. In B. Abbey (Ed.), *Instructional and cognitive impacts of Web-based education* (pp. 78-101). Hershey, PA: Idea Group Pub.
- Flash, P. (2006). Grading Writing Retrieved May 15, 2006, from [http://writing.umn.edu/tww/responding\\_grading/grading\\_writing.htm](http://writing.umn.edu/tww/responding_grading/grading_writing.htm)
- Flesch, R. F. (1948). A new readability yard-stick. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 32(June), 221-233.
- Flesch, R. F. (1949). *The art of readable writing*. NY: Harper and Row.
- Folkerts, J., Lacy, S., & Larabee, A. (2008). *The media in your life: an introduction to mass communication* (4th ed. ed.). Boston, Mass.; London: Pearson/Allyn and Bacon.
- Forde, S., Foxwell, K., & Meadows, M. (2003). Through the lens of the local *Journalism*, 4(3), 314-335.
- Foundation course in news reporting (n.d.). Retrieved June 10, 2010, from <http://www.nctj.com/distance-learning/news-reporting/index.html>
- Fox, W. (2001). *Writing the news: a guide for print journalists* (3rd ed.). Ames: Iowa State University Press.
- Franklin, B. (2006). *Local journalism and local media: making the local news*. London: Routledge.
- Freelance journalism. Retrieved June 10, 2010, from [http://www.kursy.ru/jur\\_all/anons.htm](http://www.kursy.ru/jur_all/anons.htm)
- Friedlander, E. J., Marsh, H. D., & Masterson, M. (1987). *Excellence in reporting*. St. Paul: West Pub. Co.
- Friend, C., Challenger, D., & McAdams, K. C. (2000). *Contemporary editing*. Lincolnwood, Ill.: NTC/Contemporary Pub.
- Friesen, N. (2004). Three objections to learning objects and e-learning standards In R. McGreal (Ed.), *Online Education Using Learning Objects* (pp. 59-70). London: Routledge.
- Frost, C. (2006). Ethics for local journalism. In B. Franklin (Ed.), *Local journalism and local media: making the local news* (pp. 270-279). London: Routledge.
- Fuller, J. (1996). *News values: ideas for an information age*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Funding for media development*. (2007). Retrieved June 17, 2010, from <http://cima.ned.org/media-development/funding>
- Fuson, K., Ellis, P., Tash, p., Coleman, M., Foster, S., Gowler, V., et al. (2003). *Journalism without scandal*. Retrieved Sept. 30, 2003, from [http://www.poynter.org/content/content\\_print.asp?id=41405&custom](http://www.poynter.org/content/content_print.asp?id=41405&custom)
- Fyfe, K. (2009). ASTD: New study shows training evaluation efforts need help Retrieved Feb. 3, 2009, from <http://www1.astd.org/Blog/?tag=/training+evaluation>
- Gallenson, A., Heins, J., & Heins, T. (2002). Macromedia MX: Creating learning objects. [Macromedia White Paper] Retrieved June 5, 2010, from [http://download.macromedia.com/pub/elearning/objects/mx\\_creating\\_lo.pdf](http://download.macromedia.com/pub/elearning/objects/mx_creating_lo.pdf)

- Galtung, J., & Ruge, M. (1965). The structure of foreign news *Journal of Peace Research*, 2(1), 64-91.
- Gans, H. J. (1980). *Deciding what's news: a study of CBS evening news, NBC nightly news, Newsweek, and Time* (1st Vintage Books ed.). New York: Vintage Books.
- Garner, J. (2006). It's not what you know: A transaction memory analysis of knowledge networks at NASA. *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication*, 36(4), 329-351.
- Garrison, D. (2003). Quality and access in distance education: theoretical considerations. In D. Keegan (Ed.), *Theoretical principles of distance education* (pp. 9-21). London: Routledge.
- Geisler, J. (2009). *Six hazards of TV news pooling and how to avoid diluting your coverage*. Retrieved June 4, 2009, from <http://www.poynter.org/column.asp?id=34&aid=164309>
- Geith, C., & Vignare, K. (2008). Access to education with online learning and open educational resources: can they close the gap? *JALN*, 12(1), 1-22.
- Gerbing, D. W., & Anderson, J. C. (1988). An Updated Paradigm for Scale Development Incorporating Uni. *JMR, Journal of Marketing Research*, 25(2), 186-192.
- Gibbons, A., Nelson, J., & Richards, R. (2000). The nature and origin of instructional objects Retrieved March 15, 2009, from [http://dlsystems.us/readings/NTFL\\_1/Learning\\_Objects/1\\_2\\_gibbons.pdf](http://dlsystems.us/readings/NTFL_1/Learning_Objects/1_2_gibbons.pdf)
- Gibbs, C., & Warhover, T. (2002). *Getting the whole story. Reporting and writing the news*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.
- Gibbs, G., & Simpson, C. (2004). Conditions under which assessment supports students' learning Retrieved June 15, 2010, from <http://www2.glos.ac.uk/offload/tli/lets/lathe/issue1/issue1.pdf#page=5>
- Giles, R. H. (1988). *Newsroom management: a guide to theory and practice*. Detroit: Media Management Books, Inc.
- Giles, R. H. (2003). The learning curve: Are news organizations failing their best and brightest? Retrieved Aug. 22, 2009, from <http://www.asne.org/index.cfm?id=4920>
- Githens, R. (2006). Cautions: implementing interpersonal interaction in workplace e-learning. *TechTrends*, 50(5), 21-27.
- Glaser, R. (1963). Instructional technology and the measurement of learning outcomes. *American Psychologist*, 18(2), 519-521.
- Glass, G. (1978). Standards and criteria. *Journal of Educational Measurement*, 15(4), 237-260.
- Glover, S. (1999). *Secrets of the press: journalists on journalism*. London: Allen Lane.
- Gold, S. (2001). A constructivist approach to online training for online teachers. *JALN*, 5(1), 35-57.
- Golding, P. (1977). Media professionalism in the Third World. In J. e. Curran, M. e. Gurevitch & J. e. Woollacott (Eds.), *Mass Communication and Society* (pp. 291-307). London: Sage.
- Goldstein, N., & Associated Press. (2002). *The Associated Press stylebook and briefing on media law: with Internet guide and glossary*. Cambridge, Mass.: Perseus Books.
- Goodrich Andrade, H. (2000). Using rubrics to promote thinking and learning. *Educational Leadership*, 57(5), 13-17.
- Graber, D. A. (1984). *Processing the news: how people tame the information tide*. New York: Longman.
- Grade the news interview with Anna Badkhen, foreign correspondent for the San Francisco Chronicle (2003). Retrieved Feb. 26, 2010, from <http://www.gradethenews.org/pages/Badkhen%20interview.htm>
- Graham, C., Cagiltay, K., Lim, B.-R., Craner, J., & Duffy, T. (2001). Seven principles of effective teaching: a practical lens for evaluating online courses Retrieved May 3, 2006, from [http://www.technologysource.org/article/seven\\_principles\\_of\\_effective\\_teaching/](http://www.technologysource.org/article/seven_principles_of_effective_teaching/)
- Granato, L. (1991). *Reporting and writing news*. Brunswick, VIC: Prentice Hall of Australia.

- Green, N. (2002). Concepts of news. In W. D. Sloan & L. M. Parcell (Eds.), *American Journalism* (pp. 34-43). Jefferson, N.C.
- Gronlund, N. E. (2000). *How to write and use instructional objectives* (6th ed.). Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc.
- Grossberg, L. (2006). *Mediamaking: mass media in a popular culture* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications.
- Grundy, B. (2007). *So you want to be a journalist?* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Guion, R. M. (1998). *Assessment, measurement, and prediction for personnel decisions*. Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Gunther, A. C., & Liebhart, J. L. (2006). Broad Reach or Biased Source? Decomposing the Hostile Media Effect. *Journal of Communication*, 56(3), 449-466.
- Gurevitch, M., Levy, M., & Roeh, I. (1991). The global newsroom: Convergences and diversities in the globalisation of television news. In P. Dahlgren & C. Sparks (Eds.), *Communications and citizenship: Journalism and the public sphere in the new media age*. London: Routledge.
- Ha, T. (2000). A virtual classroom, virtually every day Retrieved Aug. 22, 2009, from [http://www.poynter.org/content/content\\_view.asp?id=3548](http://www.poynter.org/content/content_view.asp?id=3548)
- Hachten, W. (1985, Aug. 5). *False start for Africa's press*. Paper presented at the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Memphis, Tennessee.
- Hackett, R. (1984). Decline of a paradigm? Bias and objectivity in news media studies. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 1(3), 229-259.
- Hague, U. (2005). The new economics of media. Micromedia, connected consumption, and the snowball effect, December 3, 2007, from <http://www.bubblegeneration.com/resources/mediaeconomics.ppt>
- Hale, J. A. (2002). *Performance-based evaluation: tools and techniques to measure the impact of training*. San Francisco; [Great Britain]: Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer.
- Hall, B., & LeCavalier, J. (2000). E-learning across the enterprise: the benchmarking study of best practices Retrieved Dec. 17, 2006, from <http://www.brandon-hall.com/elacenbenstu.html>
- Hall, S., Critcher, C., Jefferson, T., Clarke, J., & Roberts, B. (1978). *Policing the crisis: Mugging, the state, and law and order*. London: Macmillan Education.
- Hallin, D. C. (1986). *The "uncensored war": the media and Vietnam*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Hallin, D. C., & Mancini, P. (2004). *Comparing media systems: three models of media and politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hann, M. (2001, Sept. 3). Media Studies? Do yourself a favour – forget it. *Guardian*.
- Hanna, D., Glowacki-Dudka, M., & Concerigao-Runlee, S. (n.d.). 147 Practical tips for teaching online groups Retrieved Sept. 3, 2007, from <http://web.usca.edu/dotAsset/37771.pdf>
- Hara, N. (2000). Student distress in a web-based distance education course. *Information, Communication & Society*, 3(4), 557-579.
- Harcup, T., & O'Neill, D. (2001). What is news? Galtung and Ruge revisited. *Journalism Studies*, 2(2), 261-280.
- Harding, P. (2002). Impartiality in international broadcasting. In D. Tambini & J. Cowling (Eds.), *New news?: impartial broadcasting in the digital age* (pp. 98 p.). London: IPPR.
- Harris, N. (2010). One research group says the Apple iPad marks the beginning of the media tablet era Retrieved Feb. 5, 2010, from <http://www.itpro.co.uk/620149/apple-ipad-heralds-era-of-the-tablet>
- Harrower, T. (2007). *Inside reporting: a practical guide to the craft of journalism*. Boston; London: McGraw-Hill Higher Education.
- Hart, J. (2006). *A writer's coach. An editor's guide to words that work*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Hartley, J. (1982). *Understanding news*. London: Routledge, 1988.

- Hattie, J. (1987). Identifying the salient facets of a model of student learning: a synthesis of meta-analyses. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 11(2), 187-212.
- Hayakawa, S. I. (1978). *Language in thought and action* (4th ed.). New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Hayes, A., Singer, J., & Ceppos, J. (2007). Shifting roles, enduring values: the credible journalist in a digital age. *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, 22(4), 262-279.
- Hayes, A. F., & Myers, T. A. (2009). Testing the "Proximate Casualties Hypothesis": Local Troop Loss, Attention to News, and Support for Military Intervention. *Mass Communication & Society*, 12(4), 379-402.
- Hayes, D., & Guardino, M. (2010). Whose views made the news? Media coverage and the march to war in Iraq. *Political Communication*, 27(1), 59-87.
- Hawkins, V. (2002). The other side of the CNN factor: the media and the conflict. *Journalism Studies*, 3(2), 225-240.
- Heinrich, E. (2007). E-learning support for essay assessment. In N. Buzzetto-More (Ed.), *Principles of Effective Online Teaching* (pp. 265-278). Santa Rosa, California: Informing Science Press.
- Heinrich, E., & Lawn, A. (2004). *Onscreen marking support for formative assessment*. Paper presented at the Ed-Media 2004 World Conference on Educational Multimedia, Hypermedia & Telecommunications, Norfolk, USA.
- Herbert, J. (2001). Media: The Pacific Journalist Retrieved Oct. 8, 2007, from <http://www.asiapac.org.fj/cafe/pacific/resources/aspac/apmeherbert.html>
- Heywood, J. (2000). *Assessment in higher education: student learning, teaching, programmes and institutions*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Hiltz, S., & Wellman, B. (1997). Asynchronous learning networks as a virtual classroom. *Communications of the ACM*, 40(1), 44-49.
- Hiltz, S. R. (1994). *The virtual classroom: a new option for learning*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Pub. Corp.
- Hirumi, A. (2002). Student-centered, technology-rich, learning environments (SCenTRLE): Operationalizing constructivist approaches to teaching and learning. *Journal for Technology and Teacher Education*, 10(4), 497-537.
- Hodgins, W. (2002, 11-16 August). *The future of learning objects*. Paper presented at the eTEE Conference, Davos, Switzerland.
- Hogan, M. (2005). The Building Blocks of News Retrieved April, 15, 2006, from [http://www.news.u.org/courses/course\\_detail.aspx?id=mah\\_newssense05](http://www.news.u.org/courses/course_detail.aspx?id=mah_newssense05)
- Holm, H.-H. (1997). Educating journalists for a new Europe Retrieved June 15, 2010, from <http://dare.uva.nl/document/3341>
- Holmberg, B. (1995). *Theory and practice of distance education* (2nd ed.). London: Routledge.
- Hounsell, D. (1987). Essay writing and the quality of feedback. In J. T. E. Richardson, M. W. Eysenck & D. Warren-Piper (Eds.), *Student Learning: research in education and cognitive psychology*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press and Society for Research into Higher Education.
- How to weight rubrics: part four in a five-part series (2000-2006, Aug. 15, 2006). from <http://www.teachervision.fen.com/teaching-methods/rubrics/4525.html?detoured=1>
- Howard, M. M. (2003). *The weakness of civil society in post-Communist Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Huba, M., & Freed, J. (2000). Using rubrics to provide feedback to students *Learner-centered assessment on college campuses* (pp. 151-200). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Huge, M., & Glynn, C. J. (2010). Hostile Media and the Campaign Trail: Perceived Media Bias in the Race for Governor. *Journal of Communication*, 60(1), 165.
- Huot, B. (1990). The Literature of Direct Writing Assessment: Major Concerns and Prevailing Trends. *Review of Educational Research*, 237-264.
- Huot, B. (1996). Toward a new theory of writing assessment. *College Composition and Communication*, 47(4), 549-566.

- Husch, M., Sullivan, S., Rooney, D., Barnard, C., Fotis, M., Clarke, J., Noskin, G. (2005). Insights from the sharp end of intravenous medication errors: implications for infusion pump technology. *Quality & Safety in Health Care*, 14, 80-86.
- Hutcheson, G., & Sofroniou, N. (1999). *The multivariate social scientist: introductory statistics using generalized linear models*. London; Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications.
- Ince, D. (2004). *Developing Distributed and e-commerce applications*. Addison-Wesley, USA.
- Ingram, D., & Henshall, P. (2008). The news manual. A professional resource for journalists and the media Retrieved Aug. 22, 2009, from <http://www.thenewsmanual.net>
- Itule, B., & Anderson, D. (1991). *News writing and reporting for today's media*: McGraw-Hill.
- Iyengar, S. (1991). *Is anyone responsible?: how television frames political issues*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Jakubowicz, K., & Sükösd, M. (2008). *Finding the right place on the map: Central and Eastern European media change in a global perspective*. Bristol, UK; Chicago: Intellect.
- JirákJ, J. (1997). The music of change; journalism training in Eastern Europe Retrieved June 13, 2010, from <http://dare.uva.nl/document/3341>
- Johnson, D., & Johnson, R. (2004). Cooperation and the use of technology. In D. Johassen (Ed.), *Handbook of research on educational communications and technology* (pp. 785-811). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Johnson-Cartee, K. S. (2005). *News narratives and news framing: constructing political reality*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Jones, L., Finkelhor, D., & Beckwith, J. (2010). Protecting victims' identities in press coverage of child victimization. *Journalism*, 11(3), 347-367.
- Joseph, B. U. *Journalism education in countries with limited media freedom*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Joy, E., & Garcia, F. (2000). Research paper questions 'No Significant Difference' claims. *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks*, 6(1), 21-39.
- Judges' Comments (2006). Retrieved May 28, 2006, from <http://www.journalismtraining.co.nz/judges.html>
- Jung, I. (2005). Cost-effectiveness of online teacher training. *Open Learning*, 20(2), 131-146.
- Kane, J. S. (1981). *Systematic error in appraisals: Alternative approaches to their control*. Paper presented at the Paper presented at the first annual Scientist-Practitioner Conference in Industrial/Organizational Psychology, Old Dominion University, Norfolk, Va.
- Kane, J. S., & Lawler, E. E. (1979). Performance appraisal effectiveness: Its assessment and determinants. In B. Staw (Ed.), *Research in organizational behavior* (Vol. 1, pp. 425-478). Greenwich, Conn.: JAI Press.
- Karlsson, D. (2006). Getting things done: an examination of David Allen's work-life system. Chalmers University of Technology, Northumbria University, Goteborg, Sweden.
- Karlsson, M. (2010). Rituals of transparency. Evaluating online news outlets' uses of transparency rituals in the United States, United Kingdom and Sweden. *Journalism Studies*, 11(4), 535-545.
- Kawachi, P. (2008). *Future directions for distance education*. Paper presented at the Researching and promoting access to education and training: the role of distance education and e-learning in technology-enhanced environments. EDEN/UNESCO 5th Research Workshop: Plenary session. from [http://www.distanceandaccesstolearning.net/contents/AJDE2008\\_Kawachi\\_EDEN.pdf](http://www.distanceandaccesstolearning.net/contents/AJDE2008_Kawachi_EDEN.pdf)
- Kearsley, G. (2000). *Online education: learning and teaching in cyberspace*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning.
- Keeble, R. (1994). *The newspapers handbook*. London; New York, NY: Routledge.
- Keeble, R. (2005). *Print journalism: a critical introduction*. London; New York: Routledge.

- Keegan, D. (2003). Reintegration of the teaching acts. In D. Keegan (Ed.), *Theoretical principles of distance education* (pp. 113-170). London: Routledge.
- Keller, B. (2005). Assuring our credibility. Bill Keller responded to the Credibility Committee's report with variety of measures, from <http://www.nytimes.com/pdf/assuring-our-credibility.pdf>
- Keller, B. (2010). The war logs articles Retrieved July 25, 2010, from [http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/26/world/26askthetimes.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/26/world/26askthetimes.html?_r=1)
- Kennedy, G., Moen, D. R., Ranly, D., & Missouri Group. (1993). *Beyond the inverted pyramid: effective writing for newspapers, magazines, and specialized publications*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Kenney, B. (2009). As goes California: A flawed initiative could become a fabulous opportunity Sept. 1, 2009. Retrieved Sept. 1, 2009, from <http://www.schoollibraryjournal.com/article/CA6685542.html?industryid=47070>
- Kember, D., & NetLibrary Inc. (2000). *Action learning and action research. Improving the quality of teaching and learning*. London, Sterling, Va.: Kogan Page; Stylus.
- Kensicki, L. J. (2004). No cure for what ails us: The media-constructed disconnect between societal problems and possible solutions. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 81(1), 57-73.
- Kerka, S., & Wonacott, M. (2000). *Assessing learners online. Practitioner file*. Kershner, J. W. (2004). *The elements of news writing*. Boston: Pearson Education.
- Kielty, L. S. (2004). *Feedback in distance learning: do student perceptions of corrective feedback affect retention in distance learning?* Thesis submitted to University of South Florida, Tampa, Fla.
- Kiernan, V. (2003, Winter). Embargoes and Science News. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, pp. 903-920.
- Kitchener, K. (1983). Cognition, metacognition, and epistemic cognition: a three-level model of cognitive processing. *Human Development*, 4(222-232).
- Kitzinger, J., & Skidmore, P. (1995). Playing safe: media coverage of child sexual abuse prevention strategies. *Child Abuse Review*, 4(1), 47-56.
- Kirkpatrick, D. L. (1998). *Evaluating training programs : the four levels* (2nd ed. ed.). San Francisco, Calif.: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.
- Kirkpatrick, D. L., & Kirkpatrick, J. D. (2006). *Evaluating training programs : the four levels* (3rd ed. ed.). San Francisco, Calif.: Berrett-Koehler ; London : McGraw-Hill [distributor].
- Klare, G. (1974-1975). Assessing readability. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 10(1), 62-102.
- Kolb, D. A. (1976). *Learning Style Inventory*. Boston: McBer.
- Kopytoff, V. (2009). News as a social medium. *San Francisco Chronicle*, (June 27, 2009), 1-1. Retrieved from <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2009/06/26/BU2918EH8L.DTL>
- Kovach, B. (2006). Toward a new journalism with verification. *Nieman Reports* Retrieved Sept. 12, 2009, from <http://www.nieman.harvard.edu/reportsitem.aspx?id=100292>
- Kovach, B., & Rosenstiel, T. (2001). *The elements of journalism: What newspeople should know and what the public should expect*. New York: Crown.
- Kozma, R. (1994). A reply: media and methods. *Educational Technology Research and Development*, 42(1), 11-14.
- Krueger, V. (2006). NewsU Undergoes Explosive First-Year Growth Retrieved May 19, 2006, from <http://www.newsu.org/articles/view.aspx?id=442>
- Krueger, V. (2009). Poynter's News university registers 100,000the member Retrieved June 12, 2009, from <http://www.newsu.org/articles/view.aspx?id=533>
- Krug, S. (2006). *Don't make me think! : a common sense approach to web usability* (2nd ed. ed.). Indianapolis, Ind.: New Riders ; London : Pearson Education [distributor].
- Kulik, J., & Kulik, C. (1988). Timing of feedback and verbal learning. *Review of Educational Research*, 58(2), 79-97.
- Kumar, K. (Jan., 2004). *USAID's media assistance. Policy and programmatic lessons*. Retrieved 15 June, 2010, from [http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/PNACU777.pdf](http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNACU777.pdf)



- Kurtz, H. (2006). *Critiquing the press*. Retrieved July 7, 2010, from <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/discussion/2006/07/14/DI2006071400847.html>
- Kyrgyzstan (2010). Retrieved Aug. 15, 2010, from <http://en.rsrf.org/report-kyrgyzstan,113.html>
- Laitin, D. (1983). Language dissociation for Africa. In J. G. Ruggie (Ed.), *The Antinomies of interdependence: National welfare and the international division of labor* (pp. 310-327). New York; Guildford: Columbia University Press.
- Latham, G. P., & Wexley, K. N. (1981). *Increasing productivity through performance appraisal*. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley.
- Larsson, A., Oxman, A., Carling, C., Herrin, J. (2003). Medical messages in the media - barriers and solutions to improving medical journalism. *Health Expectations*, 6(4), 323-331.
- Lasica, J. (2004). *Transparency begets trust in the ever-expanding blogosphere*. Retrieved Jan. 29, 2010, from <http://www.ojr.org/ojr/technology/1092267863.php>
- Lauk, E. (2009). Reflections on changing patterns of journalism in the new EU countries. *Journalism Studies*, 10(1), 69-84.
- The learning object metadata standard (2002). November 30, 2007, from <http://www.ieeeltsc.org/working-groups/wg12LOM/lomDescription/>
- Learning Objects – Does Size Matter? (n.d.). Retrieved Jan. 18, 2006, from <http://www.springerlink.com/>
- Lee, M. A., & Solomon, N. (1990). *Unreliable sources: a guide to detecting bias in news media*. New York: Carol Pub. Group.
- Lee, S. T. (2004). Lying to tell the truth: journalists and the social context of deception. *Mass Communication & Society*, 7(1), 97-120.
- Leff, L. (2006). On the other hand Retrieved Oct. 10, 2009, from <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9F02E3DE1E31F932A35753C1A9609C8B63>
- Legault, L., Green-Demers, I., & Pelletier, L. (2006). Why do high school students lack motivation in the classroom? Toward an understanding of academic amotivation and the role of social support. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 98(3), 567-582.
- Lehman, R. (2007). Learning object repositories. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*(113), 57-66.
- Lent, J. A. (1981). The perpetual see-saw: Press freedom in the ASEAN countries. *Human Rights Quarterly*, 62(3), 62-77.
- Leonard, J. (2007). USC Annenberg School of Journalism syllabus. Newswriting - PRINT (J-202) Retrieved Feb. 20, 2010, from [http://74.125.155.132/scholar?q=cache:Y0Ia7cQkJHoJ:scholar.google.com/+tim+harrower&hl=en&as\\_sdt=2000](http://74.125.155.132/scholar?q=cache:Y0Ia7cQkJHoJ:scholar.google.com/+tim+harrower&hl=en&as_sdt=2000)
- Lester, M. (1980). Generating newsworthiness: The interpretive construction of public events. *American Sociological Review*, 45(6), 984-994.
- Lewin, K. (1948). Action research and minority problems. In G. Lewin (Ed.), *Resolving social conflicts*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Lewis, J., Cushion, S., & Thomas, J. (2005). Immediacy, convenience or engagement? An analysis of 24-hour news channels in the UK. *Journalism Studies*, 6(4), 461-477.
- Li, X., & Izard, R. (2003). 9-11 Attack coverage reveals similarities, differences. *Newspaper Research Journal*, 24(1), 204-219.
- Liaw, S.-s. (2000). *Virtual textbooks: Features and implementation*. New Jersey: Educational Technology Publications Inc.
- Lindner, M. (2006). *Use these tools, your mind will follow. Learning in immersive micromedia and microknowledge environments*. Paper presented at the 13th International Conference ALT-C 2006: The next generation, Edinburgh, Scotland, UK.
- Linn, R., Baker, E., & Dunbar, S. (1991). Complex, performance-based assessment: expectations and validation. *Educational Researcher*, 20(8), 15-21.

- Linn, R., & Miller, M. (2005). *Measurement and assessment in teaching*. Columbus, OH: Pearson Merrill Prentice Hall.
- Lipari, L. (1996). Journalistic authority: Textual strategies of legitimation. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 73(4), 821-834.
- Lippmann, W. (1922). *Public opinion*. New York,: Harcourt Brace and Company.
- Lippmann, W. (1991). *Public opinion*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers. (Original publication 1922).
- Little, B. (2001). Achieving high performance through e-learning. *Industrial and Commercial Training*, 33(6/7), 203-207.
- Livingston, S. (1972). Criterion-referenced applications of classical test theory. *Journal of Educational Measurement*, 9(1), 13-26.
- Loacker, G., Cromwell, L., & O'Brien, K. (1986). Assessment in higher education: to serve the learner. In C. Adelman (Ed.), *Assessment in higher education: Issues and contexts* (pp. 47-62). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.
- Long, L., DuBois, C., & Faley, R. (2007). Online training: the value of capturing trainee reactions. *Journal of Workplace Learning*, 20(1), 21-37.
- Lorch, R. (1993). Integration of topic and subordinate information during reading. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition*, 19(5), 1071-1081.
- Lord, C., Ross, L., & Lepper, M. (1979). Biased assimilation and attitude polarization: The effects of prior theories on subsequently considered evidence. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 37(11), 2098-2109.
- Lorenz, A. L., & Vivian, J. (1996). *News: reporting and writing*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- LoTempio, S. (2006). Enabling Coverage of Disability. *Diversity at Work* Retrieved May 18, 2009, from <http://www.poynter.org/column.asp?id=58&aid=100424>
- Lukosiunas, M. (1998). Is the transition over? *Mass Media Law and Practice Bulletin* Retrieved July 30, 2009, from [http://www.medialaw.ru/e\\_pages/publications/zip/baltic/vil06-1.html](http://www.medialaw.ru/e_pages/publications/zip/baltic/vil06-1.html)
- Luther, C., & Miller, M. (2005). Framing of the 2003 U.S. Iraq war demonstrations: An analysis of news and partisan texts. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 82(1), 78-96.
- Lysova, T. (2004, September 7, 2004). The quote of the week. *Vedomosti*, p. 2.
- Magrath, A. J. (1997). The importance of unlearning. *Across the Board*, 34(2), 39-41.
- Mahoney, R. (2006). *The world's most censored countries*. Reprinted from *The Guardian*. Retrieved July 13, 2006, from [http://www.cpj.org/op\\_ed/comment\\_rmahoney\\_05may06.html](http://www.cpj.org/op_ed/comment_rmahoney_05may06.html)
- Mahoney, M. (1977). Publication prejudices: An experimental study of confirmatory bias in the peer review system. *Cognitive Therapy and Research*, 1(2), 161-175.
- Maki, P. (2004). *Assessing for learning : building a sustainable commitment across the institution* (1st ed.). Sterling, Va.: Stylus.
- Majors, D., Ward, P., & Scott, R. (2006). Shocking turnabout: Sago mine families told just 1 alive Retrieved Jan. 4, from <http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/06004/632321.stm>
- Mancini, P. (2000). Political complexity and alternative models of journalism: the Italian case. In J. e. Curran & M.-J. Park (Eds.), *De-Westernizing Media Studies* (pp. 265-278). London and New York: Routledge.
- Manro, Y. (2005). *The role of the OSCE in media development*. International conference organised by Press Now in cooperation with the Netherlands Helsinki Committee and the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Panel discussion. Retrieved Aug. 22, 2006, from <http://www.pressnow.org/asp/publications.asp>
- Manning, P. (2001). *News and News Sources. A Critical Introduction*. London: Sage Publications.
- March, J. G., & Simon, H. A. (1967). *Organizations*. New York: John Wiley & Sons Inc.
- Maritim, E. (2009). The distance learning mode of training teachers in Kenya: challenges, prospects, and suggested policy framework. *Open Learning*, 24(3), 241-254.
- Marthoz, J.-P. (1995). Ethnic conflicts and the challenge for journalism. In *Reporting ethnic conflicts* (pp. 7-13). Brussels: International Federation of Journalists.

- Martin, D., & Penrod, D. (2006). Coming to know criteria: The value of an evaluating writing course for undergraduates. *Assessing Writing*, 11, 66-73.
- Masie, E. (2005). Nano-learning [Podcast transcript]. *Learning TRENDS e-newsletter*, December 3, 2007, from [http://www.masie.com/l5/podcasts/l5\\_u\\_podcast27.pdf](http://www.masie.com/l5/podcasts/l5_u_podcast27.pdf)
- Masmoudi, M. (1979). The new world information order. *Journal of Communication*, 29(2), 172-185.
- Massey, B. L., & Chang, L.-j. (2002). Locating Asian values in Asian journalism: a content analysis of web newspapers. *The Journal of Communication*, 52(4), 987-1003.
- Masterton, M. (1991). *What Makes News News?*. Ph.D. thesis. Flinders University, Adelaide.
- Masterton, M. (1992a). A new approach to what makes news news. *Australian Journalism Review*, 14(1), 21-26.
- Masterton, M. (1992b). What is news? Learning again is not easy. *Australian Journalism Review*, 14(2), 114-120.
- Masterton, M. (1995). Writing development stories. *Editorial Management for Women Journalists*. Retrieved July 20, from [http://dr.ntu.edu.sg/bitstream/10220/1318/1/AMIC\\_1995\\_05\\_09.pdf](http://dr.ntu.edu.sg/bitstream/10220/1318/1/AMIC_1995_05_09.pdf)
- Masterton, M. (2005). Asian Journalists Seek Values Worth Preserving. *Asia Pacific Media Educator*, 1(16), 41-47.
- Matheson, D. (2001). *News style: how the discourses of newswriting produce and restrict British broadsheet news texts*. University of Strathclyde, Glasgow.
- Mayer, R., & Moreno, R. (2003). Nine ways to reduce cognitive load in multimedia learning. *Educational Psychologist*, 38(1), 43-52.
- Mayer, R., & Wittrock, M. (1996). *Problem-solving transfer*. New York: Macmillan.
- Mazzetti, M., & Daragahi, B. (2005, Nov. 30). U.S. military covertly pays to run stories in Iraqi press. *Los Angeles Times*. from [http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/la-120105infowar\\_lat,0,5176582.story?coll=la-home-headlines](http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/la-120105infowar_lat,0,5176582.story?coll=la-home-headlines).
- McClernon, C., K. (2003). *Human performance effects of adaptive automation of various air traffic control information processing functions*. North Carolina State University, Raleigh, North Carolina.
- McCombe, J. (2009). Our criminal record. *Avenues*(65), 17-21.
- McGreal, R. (2004). Learning objects: a practical definition. *International Journal of Instructional Technology and Distance Learning*, 1(9), 21-32.
- McKane, A. (2006). *News writing*. London; Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- McFarling, U. L. (2006). Climate. In D. Blum, M. Knudson & R. M. Henig (Eds.), *A field guide for science writers* (pp. 243-250). Oxford England; New York: Oxford University Press.
- McGlone, M. S. (2005). Contextomy: the art of quoting out of context. *Media, Culture & Society*, 27(4), 511-522.
- McLachlan-Smith, C., & Irons, B. (1998). *Ideas to share: examples of successful extramural study guide design*. Unpublished manuscript, Palmerston North, New Zealand: Massey University.
- McLellan, M. (2001). *The newspaper credibility handbook*: ASNE.
- McLellan, M. (2002). Details matter: Accuracy Retrieved May 7, 2006, from <http://www.asne.org/credibilityhandbook/detailsmatter.htm>
- McNair, B. (1998). *The sociology of journalism*. London; New York: Arnold; New York, NY: Co-published in the United States of America by Oxford University Press.
- McNiff, J., & Whitehead, J. (2000). *Action research in organisations*. London; New York: Routledge.
- McQuail, D. (1992). *Media performance: mass communication and the public interest*. London: Sage.
- Meadows, M., & Billington, L. (2005). A review of the literature on marking reliability Retrieved June 10, 2010
- Melton, R. (2002). *The news writer's handbook*. Retrieved May 10, 2006, from <http://www.jea.org/resources/curriculum/stylebook.pdf>

- Mencher, M. (1994). *News reporting and writing* (6th ed.). Madison, Wis.: WCB Brown & Benchmark Publishers.
- Mensing, D. (2010). Rethinking [again] the future of journalism education. *Journalism Studies*, 11(2), 1-13.
- Merrienboer, J., Schuurman, J., Croock, M., & Paas, F. (2002). Redirecting learners' attention during training: effects on cognitive load, transfer test performance and training efficiency. *Learning and Instruction*, 12, 11-37.
- Merrienboer, J. J. G. v., & Ayres, P. (2005). Research on Cognitive Load Theory and Its Design Implications for E-Learning. *Educational Technology, Research and Development*, 53(3), 5-13.
- Mertler, C. (2001). Designing scoring rubrics for your classroom. *Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation*, 7(25). Retrieved from <http://PAREonline.net/getvn.asp?v=7&n=25>
- Messick, S. (1995). Validity of psychological assessment: Validation of inferences from person's responses and performances as scientific inquiry into score meaning. *American Psychologist*, 50, 741-749.
- Mèunsterberg, H. (1913). *Psychology and industrial efficiency*. Boston: Mifflin.
- Middleton, J. (2009). Primer migrates online. *Pacific Journalism Review*, 15(1), 243-244.
- Miller, A., & Hatley-Major, L. (2005). *News alert – again, and again, and again: How 24-hour cable news networks are redefining television breaking news*. Paper presented at the RTVJ Division at the AEJMC Annual Convention.
- Miller, E. (2002). Reflections on leadership. A system for error management Retrieved Sept. 15, 2009, from [http://www.edditteach.org/special/editingthefuture/07\\_Holt/handouts/EdwardMiller.pdf](http://www.edditteach.org/special/editingthefuture/07_Holt/handouts/EdwardMiller.pdf)
- Miller, G. (1956). The magical number seven, plus or minus two. Some limits on our capacity for processing information *Psychological Review*, 101(2), 343-352.
- Miller, M. D., & Linn, R. L. (2000). Validation of performance-based assessments. *Applied Psychological Measurement*, 24(4), 367-378.
- Moir, A. P. d., Massey, C., Baird, J. A., & Morrissy, M. (2002). Marking consistency over time. *Research in Education*(67), 79.
- Molotch, H., & Lester, M. (1974). News as purposive behavior: on the strategic use of routine events, accidents and scandal. *American Sociological Review*, 39(February), 101-112.
- Monbiot, G. (2003). *The age of consent : a manifesto for a new world order*. London: Flamingo.
- Moore, M. G., & Kearsley, G. (2005). *Distance education: a systems view* (2nd ed.). Belmont, CA: Thomson/Wadsworth.
- Morrison, A. (2002). Objectivity. In J. McGregor, Comrie, M. (Ed.), *What's news* (pp. 56-71). Palmerston North, New Zealand: Dunmore Press Ltd.
- Moskal, B. (2000). Scoring rubrics: what, when and how? *Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation*, 7(3). Retrieved from <http://PAREonline.net/getvn.asp?v=7&n=3>
- Moskal, B. M., & Leydens, J. A. (2000). Scoring rubric development: validity and reliability. *Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation*, 7(10).
- Moskal, B. (2003). Recommendations for developing classroom performance assessments and scoring rubrics. *Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation*, 8(14). Retrieved from <http://PAREonline.net/getvn.asp?v=8&n=14>
- Moskowitz, G. (2010). *Are hyperlocals replacing traditional newspapers?* Retrieved July 22, 2010, from <http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,2005729-1,00.html>
- Mott, F. L. (2006). What's news? In G. S. Adam & R. P. Clark (Eds.), *Journalism. The democratic craft* (pp. 73-79). New York, NY: Oxford University Press, Inc.
- Moynihn, R., Bero, L., Ross-Degnan, D., Henry, D., Lee, K., Watkins, J., et al. (2000). Coverage by the News Media of the Benefits and Risks of Medications. *The New England Journal of Medicine*, 22, 1645-1650.

- Moynihan, R., Heath, I., Henry, D., Gotzsche, P. (2002). Selling sickness: The pharmaceutical industry and disease mongering Commentary. *British Medical Journal*, 324, 886-891.
- Munro, Y. (2006). *Online assessment of news articles*. Paper presented at the Journalism Downunder: The future of the media in the digital age. 2nd joint JEANZ/JEA conference Auckland.
- Murray, D. M. (2000). *Writing to deadline : the journalist at work*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Murray, D. J., Boulet, J.R., Kras., Woodhouse, J.A., Cox, T., McAllister, J.D. (2004). Acute care skills in anesthesia practice. A simulation-based resident performance assessment. *Anesthesiology*, 101, 1084-1095.
- Navasky, V. (2002). Foreword. In B. Zelizer & S. Allan (Eds.), *Journalism after September 11* (pp. xiii–xviii). London: Routledge.
- Neil, D. T., Wadley, D. A., & Phinn, S. R. (1999). A generic framework for criterion-referenced assessment of undergraduate essays. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 23(3), 303-325
- Nelson, G. (1998, Apr. 7-9). *On-line evaluations: multiple choice, discussion questions, essay and authentic projects*. Paper presented at the 3rd Teaching in the Community Colleges Online Conference, Hawaii.
- Neuman, W. R., Just, M. R., & Crigler, A. N. (1992). *Common knowledge: news and the construction of political meaning*. Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press.
- Newell, A., Rosenbloom, P., & Laird, J. (1989). Symbolic architectures for cognition. In M. Posner (Ed.), *Foundations of cognitive science* (pp. 93-131). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- News executives, skeptical of government subsidies, see opportunity in technology but are unsure about revenue and the future (2010). Retrieved April 20, 2010, from [http://www.journalism.org/analysis\\_report/news\\_leaders\\_and\\_future](http://www.journalism.org/analysis_report/news_leaders_and_future)
- News release (2010). Retrieved Aug. 15, 2010, from <http://phx.corporate-ir.net/phoenix.zhtml?c=176060&p=irol-newsArticle&ID=1449176&highlight=%20>
- Newspapers regret, and defend, mine rescue 'debacle' (2006). Retrieved Jan. 5, 2006, from [http://www.editorandpublisher.com/eandp/departments/online/article\\_display.jsp?vnu\\_content\\_id=1001805699](http://www.editorandpublisher.com/eandp/departments/online/article_display.jsp?vnu_content_id=1001805699)
- Newstrom, J. W. (1983). The Management of Unlearning: Exploding the "Clean Slate" Fallacy. *Training and Development Journal*, August, 36-39.
- Ng, C., Yeung, A., & Hon, R. (2006). Does online language learning diminish interaction between student and teacher? . *Educational Media International*, 43(3), 219-232.
- Niblock, S. (2005). What is news? *Print journalism: a critical introduction* (pp. 74-104). London, New York: Routledge.
- Nichols, M. (2001). *Teaching for learning*. Palmerston North: TrainInc.
- Nicol, D., & Macfarlane-Dick, D. (2004). Rethinking formative assessment in HE: a theoretical model and seven principles of good feedback practice, December 5, 2007, from <http://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/documents/events/20040604/NicolMacfarlane-Dickpaper-revised.pdf>
- Nicol, D., & Macfarlane-Dick, D. (2006). Formative assessment and self-regulated learning: a model and seven principles of good feedback practice. *Studies in Higher Education*, 13(2), 199-218.
- Nitko, A. J. (2004). *Educational assessment of students* (4th ed.). Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Merrill.
- Nosseck, H. (2004). Our news and their news. The role of national identity in the coverage of foreign news. *Journalism*, 5(3), 343-368.
- Nowell, G. (2010). *Student course evaluations in traditional and blended courses: a case study*. Paper presented at the ABR & ITLC Conference, Orlando.
- O'Brien, R. (1995). Generalizability coefficients are reliability coefficients. *Quality & Quantity*, 29(4), 421-428.

- O'Neill, D., & Harcup, T. (2008). News values and selectivity. In K. Wahl-Jorgensen & T. Hanitzsch (Eds.), *The handbook of journalism studies* (pp. 1 v.). London: Routledge.
- Overholser, G., & Jamieson, K. H. (2005). *The press*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Owens, S., Bowman, C., & Dill, C. (2008). Overcoming procrastination: The effect of implementation intentions. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 38(2), 366-384.
- Ozgunes, N. (2000). Constraints and remedies for journalists reporting national conflict: the case of Greece and Turkey. *Journalism Studies*, 1(3), 405-426.
- Paas, F., & Merrienboer, J. (1994). Instructional control of cognitive load in the training of complex cognitive tasks. *Educational Psychology Review*, 6(4), 51-57.
- Paas, F., Tuovinen, J., Tabbers, H., & van Gerven, P. (2003). Cognitive load measurement as a means to advance cognitive load theory. *Educational Psychologist*, 38(1), 63-71.
- Page, E. (1994). Computer grading of student prose, using modern concepts and software. *Journal of Experimental Education*, 62, 127-143.
- Palloff, R. M., & Pratt, K. (2009). *Assessing the online learner: resources and strategies for faculty* (1st ed. ed.). San Francisco, CA.: Jossey-Bass; Chichester: John Wiley [distributor].
- Palmer, J. (2000). *Spinning into control: news values and source strategies*. London; New York: Leicester University Press.
- Pan, Z., & Chan, J. M. (2003, Dec). Shifting journalistic paradigms. *Communication Research*, pp. 649-682.
- Parker, R. (1974). A definition of privacy. *Rutgers Law Review*, 27, 275-293.
- Parks, P. (2006). *Making important news interesting*. Oak Park, Ill: Marion Street Press.
- Pascarella, E. T., & Terenzini, P. T. (1991). *How college affects students: findings and insights from twenty years of research*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Patel, A., & Russell, D. (2002). Cognitive skills acquisition and computer based intelligent tutoring tools. *Interactive Learning Environments*, 10(2), 139-155.
- Patel, L. (2010). Overcoming barriers and valuing evaluation Retrieved June 5, 2010, from [http://www.astd.org/LC/2010/0510\\_patel.htm](http://www.astd.org/LC/2010/0510_patel.htm)
- Patterson, P., & Wilkins, L. (1994). *Media ethics: issues and cases* (2nd ed. ed.). Madison, Wis.: Brown & Benchmark.
- Pavlina, S. (2006). Overcoming procrastination Retrieved Aug. 1, 2009, from <http://www.stevepavlina.com/articles/overcoming-procrastination.htm>
- Pellechia, M. (1997). Trends in science coverage: a content analysis of three US newspapers. *Public Understanding of Science*, 6, 49-68.
- Perceptions of New Zealand media (2009). Retrieved Oct. 5, 2009, from [http://www.umn.co.nz/Media/Perceptions\\_of\\_the\\_NZ\\_Media\\_\(Sept-09\).pdf](http://www.umn.co.nz/Media/Perceptions_of_the_NZ_Media_(Sept-09).pdf)
- Peters, O. (2007). The most industrialized form of education. In M. G. Moore (Ed.), *Handbook of distance education* (pp. 57-68). Mahwah, N.J.; London: L. Erlbaum Associates.
- Petersen, L. (2010). Making sense of news Retrieved Aug. 20, 2010, from <http://www.poynter.org/column.asp?id=136&aid=189206>
- Phillips, A. (2010). Transparency and the new ethics of journalism. *Journalism Practice*, iFirst Article, 1-10.
- Phillips, E. (1977). Approaches to objectivity: Journalistic versus social science perspectives. In P. Hirsch, P. Miller & F. Kline (Eds.), *Strategies for communication research* (pp. 63-77). Beverly Hills, CA.
- Phillips, J. J., & Stone, R. D. (2002). *How to measure training results: a practical guide to tracking the six key indicators*. New York, N.Y.; London: McGraw-Hill.
- Phillips, P. P., & Phillips, J. J. (2007). *The value of learning: how organizations capture value and ROI and translate it into support, improvement, and funds*. San Francisco, Calif.: Jossey-Bass; Chichester: John Wiley [distributor].
- Philo, G., & Berry, M. (2004). *Bad News from Israel*. London: Pluto Press.
- Phipps, R., & Merisotis, J. (1999). *What's the difference? A review of contemporary research on the effectiveness of distance learning in higher education*. Washington, DC: The Institute for Higher Education Policy.

- Piaget, J. (1952). *The origins of intelligence in children; translated by Margaret Cook*. New York, International Universities Press
- Piaget, J., & Seagram, G. N. (1969). *The mechanisms of perception; translated by G. N. Seagram*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Pilling, R. (2006). Local journalists and the local press. In B. Franklin (Ed.), *Local journalism and local media: making the local news* (pp. 104-114). London: Routledge.
- Plimmer, B., & Mason, P. (2004). *Designing and environment for annotating and grading student assignments*. Paper presented at the OZCHI, Wollongong, Australia.
- Plimmer, B., & Mason, P. (2006). A Pen-based Paperless Environment for Annotating and Marking Student Assignments Retrieved November 21, 2007, from <http://www.crpit.com/confpapers/CRPITV50Plimmer.pdf>
- Plotnik, A. (1982). *The elements of editing: a modern guide for editors and journalists*. New York, London: Macmillan; Collier Macmillan.
- Ponsford, D. (2005, 22 April). Journalists are out of touch with readers, says Murdoch. *Press Gazette*.
- Popham, W. J. (1978a). As always, provocative. *Journal of Educational Measurement*, 15(4), 297-300.
- Popham, W. J. (1978b). *Criterion-referenced measurement*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Popham, W. J. (1974). An approaching peril: cloud-referenced tests. *The Phi Delta Kappan*, 55(9), 614-615.
- Popham, W. J. (1998). Confessions of an assessment convert. *The Phi Delta Kappan*, 79(5), 380-384.
- Popham, W. J. (1997). What's wrong - and what's right - with rubrics. *Educational Leadership*, 55(2), 72-75.
- Popham, W. J. (1999). *Classroom assessment: what teachers need to know* (2nd ed.). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Powell, M. J. (1992). The systematic development of correlated interpersonal and metalinguistic uses in stance adverbs. *Cognitive Linguistics*, 3(1), 75-110.
- Pozner, V. (2008). There is no freedom of speech in Russia Retrieved Mar. 27, 2008, from [http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/hi/russian/russia/newsid\\_7317000/7317505.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/hi/russian/russia/newsid_7317000/7317505.stm)
- Press accuracy rating hits two decade low (2009). Retrieved Sept. 17, 2009, from <http://people-press.org/report/543/>
- Principles of journalism (2006). Retrieved Sept. 22, 2009, from <http://www.journalism.org/node/1951>
- Procrastination (2006). Retrieved Aug. 18, 2009, from <http://sas.calpoly.edu/asc/ssl/procrastination.html>
- Professional freelance journalism. from <http://www.morrisjournalismacademy.com>
- Pronin, E., Gilovich, T., & Ross, L. (2004). Objectivity in the eye of the beholder: Divergent perceptions of bias in self versus others. *Psychological Review*, 111(3), 781-799.
- Purse, M. (2010). Jayson Blair has bipolar disorder Retrieved February 20, 2010, from <http://bipolar.about.com/cs/crime/a/jaysonblair.htm>
- Quandt, T. (2008). (No) news on the world wide web? A comparative content analysis of online news in Europe and the United States. *Journalism Studies*, 9(5), 717-738.
- Ramage, T. R. (2002). The "No significant difference" phenomenon: a literature review. *Journal of Instructional Science and Technology*, 5(1).
- Ramaprasad, A. (1983). On the definition of feedback. *Behavioral Science*, 28(1), 4-13.
- Ramirez, J. (1983). *Philippine journalism handbook (revised edition)*. Philippines: Metro Manila.
- Randall, D. (1996). *Universalny Zhurnalst (The universal journalist)*. Moscow: Mezhdunarodny Tsent Zhurnalistiki.
- Randall, D. (2000). *The universal journalist* (2nd ed. ed.). London: Pluto Press.
- Rating: Heart drug eases clots in legs, study finds (2006). Retrieved May 24, 2006, from <http://www.mediadoctor.org.au/content/article.jsp?intArticleID=884>

- Reese, S. (2001). Understanding the global journalist: a hierarchy-of-influences approach. *Journalism Studies*, 2(2), 173-187.
- Reese, S. (2008). Theorizing a globalized journalism. In M. Löffelholz & D. H. Weaver (Eds.), *Global journalism research: theories, methods, findings, future* (pp. xiv, 304 p.). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- Reigeluth, C., & Nelson, L. (1997). A new paradigm of ISD? In R. Branch & B. Minor (Eds.), *Educational media and technology yearbook* (Vol. 22, pp. 24-35). Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited.
- Renkl, A., & Atkinson, R. (2002). Learning from examples: Fostering self-explanations in computer-based learning environments. *Interactive Learning Environments*, 10(2).
- Resnick, J., & Donna, C. (2009). How to pitch a news story Retrieved June 10, 2010, from <http://www.youtube.com/reporterscenter#p/f/22/Vut4gPPzEac>
- Reuters (2007). Harmony says 3,200 S.African gold miners trapped Retrieved 12 July, 2009, from <http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/L03432763.htm>
- Reuters handbook of journalism (2008). from <http://www.reuterslink.org/docs/reutershandbook.pdf>
- Rich, C. (2009). *Writing and reporting news: a coaching method* (6th ed.). Boston, MA: Wadsworth.
- Richards, G., McGreal, R., Hatala, M., & Friesen, N. (2002). The evolution of learning object repository technologies: portals for on-line objects for learning. *Journal of Distance Education*, 17(3), 67-79.
- Richardson, J., & Barkho, L. (2009). Reporting Israel/Palestine. Ethnographic insights into the verbal and visual rhetoric of BBC journalism. *Journalism Studies*, 10(5), 594-622.
- Ridgway, J., & McCusker, S. (2004). *Literature review on e-assessment*. Retrieved Apr. 2, 2009, from <http://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/docs/00/19/04/40/PDF/ridgway-j-2004-r10.pdf>
- Ring, G., & Mathieux, G. (2002). *The key components of quality learning*. Paper presented at the ASTD Techknowledge 2002 Conference.
- Roberts, L. (2005). Industrial technology project: grading rubric. *Tech Directions*, 64(6), 12-13.
- Robie, D. (Ed.). (2001). *The pacific journalist. A practical guide*: University of the South Pacific Journalism Programme.
- Robinson, K. (1996). Of mail-order brides and "boys' own" tales: representation of Asian-Australian marriages. *Feminist Review*, 52, 53-68.
- Robinson, P. (1999). The CNN effect: can the news media drive foreign policy? *Review of International Studies*, 25(2), 301-309.
- Robinson, P. (2000). The policy-media interaction model: measuring media power during humanitarian crisis. *Journal of Peace Research*, 37(5), 613-633.
- Rogers, T. What makes something newsworthy? *About.com* Retrieved June 7, 2009, from <http://journalism.about.com/od/reporting/a/newsworthy.htm>
- Rogers, W., Maurer, T., Salas, E., & Fisk, A. (1997). Task analysis and cognitive theory: controlled and automatic processing task analytic methodology. In J. Ford (Ed.), *Improving training effectiveness in work organizations* (pp. 19-46). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Rohrmann, B. (2002). Verbal qualifiers for rating scales: Sociolinguistic considerations and psychometric data Retrieved June 12, 2010, from <http://www.rohrmannresearch.net/pdfs/rohrmann-vqs-report.pdf>
- Rolston, B., & McLaughlin, G. (2004). All news is local: covering the war in Iraq in Northern Ireland's daily newspapers. *Journalism Studies*, 5(2), 191-202.
- Romano, C. (1986). What? The grisly truth about bare facts. In R. K. Manoff & M. Schudson (Eds.), *Reading the news* (pp. 38-78). New York: Pantheon.
- Rosenberg, M. J. (2002). E-learning trends in the pharma industry. *Pharmaceutical Executive*, 22(10), 114-115.
- Rosental, A. (2002). Knight Center for Journalism Retrieved Aug. 15, 2010, from <http://knightcenter.utexas.edu/about.php>



- Rowan, K. (1989). Moving beyond the what to the why: differences in professional and popular science writing. *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication*, 19(2), 161-179.
- Rowe, K. (2003, Oct. 19-21). *The importance of teacher quality as a key determinant of students' experiences and outcomes of schooling*. Paper presented at the Research Conference 2003, Building Teacher Quality: What does the research tell us, Melbourne.
- Roy, A., & Raymond, L. (2006). *E-learning in support of SMEs: pipe dream or reality?* Paper presented at the Proceedings of the 5th European Conference on e-Learning.
- Roy, A., & Raymond, L. (2008). Meeting the Training Needs of SMEs: is e-Learning a Solution? *Electronic Journal of e-Learning*, 6(2), 89-98.
- Rugelj, J. (2000). *Collaborative virtual environments for problem based learning*. Paper presented at the International Perspectives on Tele-Education and Virtual Learning Environments, Aldershot.
- Rugelj, J. (2001). *Some experiences with virtual classroom for workplace learning*. Paper presented at the Industry Education Conference, Milos Island, Greece.
- Ruiz, J., Mintzer, M., & Leipzig, R. (2006). The impact of e-learning in medical education. *Academic Medicine*, 81(3), 207-212.
- Rupar, V. (2006). Now did you find that out? Transparency of the newsgathering process and the meaning of news. A case study of New Zealand journalism. *Journalism Studies*, 7(1), 127-143.
- Russell, J., Elton, L., Swinglehurst, D., & Greenhalgh, T. (2006, Aug). Using the online environment in assessment for learning: a case-study of a web-based course in primary care. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, pp. 465-478.
- Russell, T. L. (2001). *The no significant difference phenomenon* (5th ed.): IDECC.
- Russia (2010). from <http://en.rsrf.org/report-russia,131.html>
- Russial, J. (2004). *Strategic copy editing*. New York; London: The Guilford Press.
- Saba, F. (1999). Is distance education comparable to "traditional education"? Retrieved May 4, 2006, from <http://www.distance-educator.com/der/comparable.html>
- Saba, F. (2000). Research in distance education: A status report. *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning* Retrieved June 17, 2006, from [www.irrodl.org](http://www.irrodl.org)
- Sadler, D. (1998). Formative assessment: Revisiting the territory. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy&Practice*, 5(1), 77-84.
- Sadler, R. D. (2005). Interpretations of criteria-based assessment and grading in higher education. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 30(2), 175-194.
- Salomon, G. (1988). AI in reverse: computer tools that turn cognitive. *Journal of Educational Computing Research*, 4(2), 123-134.
- Sandar, S. (1998). Effect of source attribution on perception of online news stories. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 75(1), 55-68.
- Sapolsky, B., & Kaye, B. (2005). The use of offensive language by men and women in prime time television entertainment. *Atlantic Journal of Communications*, 13(4), 292-303.
- Scanlan, C. (2000a). *Reporting and writing: basics for the 21st century*. Ft. Worth: Harcourt College Publishers.
- Scanlan, C. (2000b). *Workbook to accompany "Reporting and writing: basics for the 21st century"*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Scanlan, C. (2003). Writing from the top down: Pros and cons of the inverted pyramid Retrieved May 28, 2009, from <http://www.poynter.org/column.asp?id=52&aid=38693>
- Scanlan, C. (2006). Just looking for a quote, Minister Goebbels Retrieved Sept. 5, 2006, from [http://poynter.blogs.com/the\\_mechanic\\_the\\_muse/accuracy/index.html](http://poynter.blogs.com/the_mechanic_the_muse/accuracy/index.html)
- Scanlan, C. (2007a). Ask Chip: An online opportunity to learn the writing process Retrieved Aug. 22, 2009, from <http://www.poynter.org/column.asp?id=52&aid=129446>
- Scanlan, C. (2007b). You hate it, you love it: The inverted pyramid Retrieved Dec. 3, 2009

- Scharrer, E. (2008). Media exposure and sensitivity to violence in news reports: Evidence of desensitization? *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 85(2), 291-310.
- Scheuer, J. (2007). *Journalism and academia: How they can work together*. Retrieved Jan. 31, 2010, from <http://www.nieman.harvard.edu/reportsitem.aspx?id=100189>
- Schiffrin, A. (2006). PR in developing countries. In J. Hobsbawm (Ed.), *Where the truth lies* (pp. 184-193). London: Atlantic Books.
- Schwitzer, G. (1992). Doctoring the news: miracle cures, video press releases and TV medical reporting. *Quill*, 80(9), 19-21.
- Shirattudin, N., Hassan, S., & Landoni, M. (2003). A usability study for promoting eContent in higher education. *Educational Technology & Society*, 64(2), 112-124.
- Schlesinger, D. (2009). Rethinking rights, accreditation, and journalism itself in the age of Twitter Retrieved June 24, 2009, from <http://blogs.reuters.com/reuters-editors/2009/06/24/rethinking-rights-accreditation-and-journalism-itself-in-the-age-of-twitter/>
- Schmidt, F. L., Viswesvaran, C., & Ones, D. S. (2000). Reliability is not validity and validity is not reliability. *Personnel Psychology*, 901-912.
- Schmidt, M. (1997). Distance learning models in journalism training. *European journalism training in transition, the inside view* Retrieved June 15, 2010, from <http://dare.uva.nl/document/3341>
- Schramm, W. (1966). Foreword. In L. Sommerlad (Ed.), *The press in developing countries* (pp. v-vii). Sydney: Sydney University Press.
- Schraw, G., Dunkle, M., & Bendixen, L. (1995). Cognitive processes in well-defined and ill-defined problem solving. *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, 9, 523-538.
- Schudson, M. (1978). *Discovering the news: a social history of American newspapers*. New York: Basic Books.
- Schudson, M. (1995). *The power of news*. Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press.
- Schudson, M. (2001). The objectivity norm in American journalism. *Journalism*, 2(2), 149-170.
- Schudson, M. (2002). What's unusual about covering politics as usual. In B. Zelizer & S. Allan (Eds.), *Journalism after September 11* (pp. xviii, 268 p.). London: Routledge.
- Schuler, A. (2008). Thinking about good writing. In J. Tully (Ed.), *Intro* (pp. 95-99). Wellington: New Zealand Journalists Training Organisation.
- Schwartz, J. (2002). *Reporting handbook*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Scott, T. (2010). Journalism warning labels Retrieved Aug. 24, 2010, from <http://www.tomscott.com/warnings/>
- Scott, W. D. (1917). A fourth method of checking results in vocational selection. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 1, 61-67.
- Seagal response (2003). from <http://www.nytc.com/pdf/committeereport.pdf>
- Sedorkin, G., & McGregor, J. (2002). *Interviewing: A guide for journalists and writers*. Crows Nest, NSW: Allen and Unwin.
- Sellers, L. (1985). *The simple subs book* (2nd ed. ed.). Oxford: Pergamon.
- Seok, S. (2007). Standards, accreditation, benchmarks, and guidelines in distance education. *Quarterly Review of Distance Education*, 8(4), 387-398.
- Sessions, L. A. (2003). *Verification and balance in science news: how the New Zealand mass media report scientific claims: a thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, University of Canterbury*.
- Shaik, N. (2006). Computer-adaptive online exit surveys: conceptual and methodological issues. In D. Williams, S. Howell & M. Hricko (Eds.), *Online assessment, measurement and evaluation: emerging practices* (pp. 28-44). Hershey, PA: Information Science Pub
- Shapiro, L. (1995). *Training effectiveness handbook: a high-results system for design, delivery and evaluation*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

- Sherry, A., Fulford, C., & Zhang, S. (1998). Assessing distance learners' satisfaction with Interaction: A quantitative and a qualitative measure. *The American Journal of Distance Education*, 12(3), 4028.
- Sherson, V. (2004). *Journalism training: Current practices and future needs*. Paper presented at the The practice of journalism in an increasingly diverse society. The 2004 JEANZ annual conference, Christchurch.
- Shirattudin, N., Hassan, S., & Landoni, M. (2003). A usability study for promoting eContent in higher education. *Educational Technology & Society*, 64(2), 112-124
- Shoemaker, P. J., & Reese, S. D. (1996). *Mediating the message: theories of influences on mass media content* (2nd ed. ed.). White Plains, N.Y.; London: Longman.
- Shoham-Saloman, V., Avner, R., & Neeman, R. (1989). You're changed if you do and changed if you don't: Mechanisms underlying paradoxical interventions. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 57(6), 590-598.
- Short, R. R. (1981). Managing unlearning. *Training and Development Journal*, 35(7), 1-6.
- Shute, V. (2003). Adaptive e-learning. *Educational Psychologist*, 38(2), 105-114.
- Simkins, M. (1999). Designing great rubrics. *Technology and Learning*, 20(1), 23-30.
- Simon, H. (1974). How big is a chunk? *Science*, 183(4124), 482-488.
- Simon, M., & Forgette-Giroux, R. (2000). Impact of a content selection framework on portfolio assessment at the classroom level. *Assessment in Education*, 17(1), 83-101.
- Simon, M., & Forgette-Giroux, R. (2001). A rubric for scoring postsecondary academic skills. *Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation*, from <http://pareonline.net/getvn.asp?v=7&n=18>
- Simonson, M. R., Smaldino, S., Albright, M., & Zvacek, S. (2009). *Teaching and learning at a distance: foundations of distance education* (4th ed. ed.): Pearson Education.
- Singer, J. (2007). Contested autonomy. *Journalism Studies*, 8(1), 79-95.
- Sinkula, J. M. (2002). Market-based success, organizational routines, and unlearning. *The Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, 17(4), 253-269.
- Sitzmann, T., Kraiger, K., Stewart, D., & Wisher, R. (2006). The Comparative Effectiveness of Web-Based and Classroom Instruction: A Meta-Analysis. *Personnel Psychology*, 59(3), 623-664
- Smiles, S. (2001). Foreword. In D. Robie (Ed.), *The Pacific journalist. A practical guide* (pp. ix-xii). Suva, Fiji: Journalism Programme, University of the South Pacific; University of the South Pacific Book Center.
- Smith, P., & Dillon, C. (1999). Comparing distance learning and classroom learning: Conceptual considerations. *The American Journal of Distance Education*, 13(2), 6-23.
- Smith, R. (2004). Guidelines for authors of learning objects Retrieved June 25, 2010, from <http://eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED505110.pdf>
- Smolkin, R. (2006). Too transparent? *American Journalism Review*, 28(2), 16-23.
- Soled, S. W. (1995). *Assessment, testing, and evaluation in teacher education*. Norwood, N.J.: Ablex Pub. Corp.
- Solove, D. J. (2006). A Taxonomy of Privacy. *University of Pennsylvania Law Review*, 154(4), 477-564.
- Sommerville, C. J. (1999). *How the news makes us dumb: the death of wisdom in an information society*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.
- South, J., & Monson, D. (2000). A university-wide system for creating, capturing, and delivering learning objects, November 30, 2007, from <http://reusability.org/read/chapters/south.doc>
- Spear, M. (1997). The influence of contrast effects upon teachers' marks. *Educational Research*, 39(2), 229-233.
- Speere, L. (2002). Story assignment grading considerations. Journalism 310: Writing for mass media Retrieved May 14, 2006, from <http://writing.umn.edu/tww/WID/journalism/grading/journ310grad.htm>
- Speck, B. (1998). Unveiling some of the mystery of professional judgment in classroom assessment. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*(74), 17-31.

- Spiro, R., & Jehng, J. (1990). Cognitive flexibility and hypertext: Theory and technology for the nonlinear and multidimensional traversal of complex subject matter. In D. Nix & R. Spiro (Eds.), *Cognition, education, and multimedia: exploring ideas in high technology*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Sreberny-Mohammadi, A. (1996). The many cultural faces of imperialism. In P. Golding & P. Harris (Eds.), *Beyond cultural imperialism: globalization, communication and the new international order* (pp. 49-68). London: SAGE.
- Startseva, A. (2001, June 9, 2001). Russian journalism's dirty little secret. *The Moscow Times*, p. 1. from [www.themoscowtimes.com/stories/2001/06/09/001-full.html](http://www.themoscowtimes.com/stories/2001/06/09/001-full.html).
- Steel, P. (2007). The nature of procrastination: A meta-analytic and theoretical review of quintessential self-regulatory failure. *Psychological Bulletin*, 133(1), 65-94.
- Steele, B. (2000). Guiding principles for the journalist Retrieved Mar. 15, 2005, from <http://www.poynter.org/column.asp?id=36&aid=4349>
- Steiner, L. (1988). The role of readers in reporting texts. *Journalism Quarterly*, 65(3), 642-647.
- Stelter, B. (2010). Study of waterboarding coverage prompts a debate in the press Retrieved July 7, 2010, from <http://mediadecoder.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/07/02/study-of-waterboarding-coverage-prompts-a-debate-in-the-press/>
- Stenvall, M. (2008). Unnamed sources as rhetorical constructs in news agency reports. *Journalism Studies*, 9(2), 229-239.
- Stewart, J. B. (1998). *Follow the story : how to write successful nonfiction*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Steve Jobs on iPad ebooks: 5 million ebooks downloaded in 65 days, now reads PDFs (2010). Retrieved June 15, 2010, from <http://thenextweb.com/apple/2010/06/07/steve-jobs-on-ipad-ebooks-5-million-ebooks-downloaded-in-65-days-now-reads-pdfs/>
- Stevenson, R., & Greene, M. (1980). A reconsideration of bias in the news. *Journalism Quarterly*, 57(1), 115-121.
- Stewart, I. (2009). Readers' ombudsman: Distance no problem when it comes to judging a news story. *The Scotsman*.
- Stobart, G. (2006). Influencing classroom assessment. *Assessment in Education*, 13(3), 235-238.
- Stöber, J., & Joorman, J. (2001). Worry, procrastination and perfectionism: differentiating amount of worry, pathological worry, anxiety and depression. *Cognitive Therapy and Research*, 25(1), 49-60.
- Stolyarova, G. (2006, May 26, 2006). Local press plagued by corruption. *The St. Petersburg Times*, p. 1.
- Strother, J. (2002). An assessment of the effectiveness of e-learning in corporate training programs Retrieved May 12, 2006, from <http://www.irrodl.org/index.php/irrodl/article/viewArticle/83/160>
- Stringer, E. T. (1996). *Action research : a handbook for practitioners*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications.
- Strunk, W., & White, E. B. (1959). *The Elements of Style*: pp. xiv. 71. Macmillan Co.: New York.
- Suckville, R. (2008). Let truth and falsehood grapple: Milton as a dubious guide to some questions about free speech. *Australian Journalism Review*, 31(1), 107-120.
- Sumpter, R., & Garner, J. (2007). Telling the Columbia story. Source selection in news accounts of a shuttle accident. *Science communication*, 28(4), 455-475.
- Sutcliffe, K., M. (2004). Defining and classifying medical error: lessons for learning. *Quality & Safety in Health Care*, 13, 8-9.
- Suthers, D., Dwyer, N., Medina, R., & Vatrappu, R. (2007). A framework for analyzing interactional processes in online learning, *Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (AERA)*. Chicago.

- Swan, K. (2006). Assessment and collaboration in online learning. *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks*, 10(1). Retrieved from [http://www.sloan-c.org/publications/jaln/v10n1/v10n1\\_5swan.asp](http://www.sloan-c.org/publications/jaln/v10n1/v10n1_5swan.asp)
- Swanson, R. A., & Holton, E. (1999). *Results: how to assess performance, learning, and perceptions in organizations*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.
- Sweeney, F. (2009). On *International correspondents*: CNN.
- Sweller, J., & Chandler, P. (1994). Why some material is difficult to learn. *Cognition and Instruction*, 12(3), 185-233.
- Sweller, J., Merrienboer, J. J. G. v., & Paas, F. G. (1998). Cognitive architecture and instructional design. *Educational Psychology Review*, 10, 251-296.
- Tambini, D. (2009). What are financial journalists for? *Journalism Studies*, 11(2), 158-174.
- Teerajarmorn, J. (2005, August 4-7, 2005). Assessing students online. *Second International Conference on eLearning for Knowledge-Based Society* Retrieved August 15, 2006, from <http://www.journal.au.edu/ijcim/2005/specialaug05/PP27.pdf>
- Thomas, R. (2001). Media: The Pacific Journalist – valuable insight Retrieved Oct. 8, 2007, from <http://www.asiapac.org.fj/cafepacific/resources/aspac/nzjtonoted.html>
- Thompson, M., Manro, Y., & Palmer, P. (2004). Media development by OSCE field missions. Amsterdam 2004. ([www.pressnow.org](http://www.pressnow.org)) Retrieved June 8, 2006, from <http://www.pressnow.org/asp/publications.asp>
- Thompson, M. (2009). *An antidote for web overload. With a hunger for explanatory guidance amid the raging storm of Web news flashes, a journalist stresses context to attract digital users*. Retrieved Dec. 14, 2009, from <http://www.nieman.harvard.edu/reportsitem.aspx?id=101886>
- Tomal, D. R. (2003). *Action research for educators*. Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press.
- Thomson, E., White, P., & Kitley, P. (2008). "Objectivity" and "hard news" reporting across cultures. Comparing the news report in English, French, Japanese and Indonesian journalism. *Journalism Studies*, 9(2), 218-228.
- Tierney, R., & Simon, M. (2004). What's still wrong with rubrics: Focusing on the consistency of performance criteria across scale levels. *Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation*, 9(2). Retrieved from <http://pareonline.net/getvn.asp?v=9&n=2>
- The Times and Iraq (2004, May 26, 2004). *New York Times*. from [http://www.nytimes.com/2004/05/26/international/middleeast/26FTE\\_NOTE.html?ei=5070&en=93aa8cb67941bb7a&ex=1154923200&pagewanted=print&position](http://www.nytimes.com/2004/05/26/international/middleeast/26FTE_NOTE.html?ei=5070&en=93aa8cb67941bb7a&ex=1154923200&pagewanted=print&position).
- Times reporter who resigned leaves long trail of deception (2003). *The New York Times*. from <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/05/11/national/11PAPE.html?ex=1367985600&en=d6f511319c259463&ei=5007&partner=USERLAND>.
- Tomlinson, J. (1999). *Globalization and culture*. Chichester: Polity Press.
- Tretyakov, O. (2007). *My strategy of a successful newspaper*. St. Petersburg, Russia: Vershina.
- Tretyakov, V. (2004). *How to become a famous journalist: Course of lectures on theory and practice of the contemporary Russian journalism*. Moscow: Lodomir.
- Tuchman, G. (1972). Objectivity as strategic ritual: An examination of newsmen's notions of objectivity. *American Journal of Sociology*, 77(4), 660-679.
- Tuchman, G. (1973). Making news by doing work: Routinizing the unexpected. *American Journal of Sociology*, 79(1), 110-131.
- Tucker, J. (2008). The News Story. In J. Tully (Ed.), *Intro*. Wellington: New Zealand Journalists Training Organisation.
- Tuggle, C. A., Huffman, S., & Rosengard, D. S. (2007). Reporting Live From the Scene: Enough to Attract the 18-24 Audience? *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 51(1), 58-72.
- Tully, J. (2008a). The News Story. In J. Tully (Ed.), *Intro*. Wellington: New Zealand Journalists Training Organisation.
- Tully, J. (2008b). Objectivity. In J. Tully (Ed.), *Intro* (pp. 303-308). Wellington: New Zealand Journalists Training Organisation.

- Tully, J. (2008c). Reporting Diversity. In J. Tully (Ed.), *Intro* (pp. 233-241). Wellington: New Zealand Journalists Training Organisation.
- Tully, J. (Ed.). (2008d). *Intro*. Wellington: New Zealand Journalists Training Organisation.
- Upcraft, M. L., Schuh, J. H., Miller, T. K., Terenzini, P. T., & Whitt, E. J. (1996). *Assessment in student affair: a guide for practitioners*. San Francisco, Calif.: Jossey-Bass.
- Uzbekistan (2010). Retrieved Aug. 15, 2010, from <http://en.rsfo.org/report-uzbekistan,123.html>
- Vallone, R., Ross, L., & Lepper, M. (1985). The hostile media phenomenon: Biased perception and perceptions of media bias in coverage of the Beirut massacre. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 49(3), 577-585.
- Van Eerde, W. (2003). Procrastination: Self-regulation in initiating aversive goals. *Applied Psychology*, 49(2), 372-389.
- Vignare, K. (2007). Review of literature: Blended learning: using ALN to change the classroom – will it work? In A. Piciano & C. D. Dziuban (Eds.), *Blended learning: Research perspectives* (pp. 37-63). Needham, MA: Sloan-C.
- Villinger, R. (1996). Post-acquisition managerial learning in central east Europe. *Organization Studies*, 17(2), 181-206.
- Voltmer, K. (2000). Constructing political reality in Russia. *Izvestiya – between old and new journalistic practices*. *European Journal of Communication* 15(4), 469-500.
- Vultee, J., & Wilkins, L. (2004). *News as a public service: Thinking through coverage of disasters and terrorism*. Retrieved June 5, 2009, from <http://hcrc.missouri.edu/events/agro04/other/disasters.pdf>
- Vygotsky, L. (1962). *Thought and language*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Vygotsky, L. (1978). *Mind in society*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Wang, H. (2005). A qualitative exploration of the social interaction in an online learning community. *International Journal of Technology in Teaching and Learning*, 1(2), 79-88.
- Walsh, W. B., & Betz, N. E. (1995). *Tests and assessment* (3rd ed.). Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall.
- Ward, M. (2002). *Journalism online*. Oxford: Focal Press.
- Waterhouse, K., & Waterhouse, K. D. m. s. (1993). *Waterhouse on newspaper style* (Rev. and expanded ed. ed.). London: Penguin.
- Watts, G. (1998). Making a scene. In W. Dawkins & C. Inman (Eds.), *Inside the FT: an insight into the art of FT Journalism* (pp. 57-71). London: FT Republishing.
- Weaver, D. H., & Wu, W. (1998). *The Global journalist : news people around the world*. Cresskill, N.J.: Hampton Press.
- Weigle, S. C. (2002). *Assessing writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Weiner, J. (2010). *Dick Cheney could not be prouder of that time he told Pat Leahy to "go fuck himself" on the Senate floor*. Retrieved July 6, 2010, from <http://www.vanityfair.com/online/daily/2010/04/dick-cheney-could-not-be-prouder-of-that-time-he-told-pat-leahy-to-go-fuck-himself-on-the-senate-floor.html>
- Weiss, R. (2003). *How to be a crackerjack editor on deadline* Retrieved May 25, 2007, from <http://www.weisswrite.com/journalists/Howtobeacrackerjacklineditor.htm>
- Westerstahl, J. (1983). Objective news reporting: General premises *Communication Research*, 10(3), 403-424.
- White, J., & Graham, B. (2005, Dec. 3). Military says it paid Iraq papers for news. *Washington Post*, p. A01. from <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/12/02/AR2005120201454.html?nav%3Dhcmodule&sub=A>
- Whitney, C. (2009). Talk to The Times: Assistant Managing Editor Craig R. Whitney Retrieved Sept. 17, 2009, from <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/13/business/media/14askthetimes.html>
- Wicklein, J. (2007). Effective and affordable coaching plans offered for individual reporters or newspaper training editors Retrieved Aug. 20, 2009, from <http://www.wickleinwritingcoach.com/>

- Wiggins, G. (1998). *Educative assessment. Designing assessments to inform and improve student performance*. San-Francisco: Jossey Bass Publishers.
- Williams, L., Cervin, C., & Massey University. School of Social and Cultural Studies. (2004). *Contemporary approaches to participatory action research in Aotearoa/New Zealand*. Auckland, N.Z.: School of Social and Cultural Studies Massey University.
- Wiist, M. (1997). Seeking a coaching style of teaching news writing. *Journalism and Mass Communication Educator*, 51(4), 68-74.
- Wiley, D. (2002). Connecting learning objects to instructional design theory: a definition, a metaphor, and a taxonomy. *The instructional use of learning objects*, November 30, 2007, from <http://reusability.org/read/chapters/wiley.doc>
- Wiley, D. (2002). Connecting learning objects to instructional design theory: a definition, a metaphor, and a taxonomy Retrieved Nov. 30, 2007, from <http://reusability.org/read/chapters/wiley.doc>
- Williams, T. N. (1987). Journalism training in Africa. In C. Udofia (Ed.), *Handbook for African journalists* (pp. 1-6). Cross River State, Nigeria: Itiaba Publishers and World Press Freedom Committee.
- Willis, J. (1991). *The shadow world: lines between the news media and reality*. New York: Praeger.
- Windhauser, J., & Click, J. (1972). *High school journalism courses, teachers and perceived professional needs in Indiana, Ohio and Pennsylvania*. Paper presented at the Association for Education in Journalism Conference.
- Wood, P., Bruner, J., & Ross, G. (1976). The role of tutoring in problem solving. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 17, 89-100.
- Woodbury, R., Roberts, I., & Shannon, S. (2000). vGallery: web spaces for collaboration and assessment Retrieved August 5, 2006, from [http://www.autc.gov.au/teaching\\_forum/2000/vgallery.pdf](http://www.autc.gov.au/teaching_forum/2000/vgallery.pdf)
- Woolf, H. (2004). Assessment criteria: Reflections on current practices. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 29(4), 479-493.
- Yeing, A., Jin, P., & Sweller, J. (1998). Cognitive load and learner expertise: split-attention and redundancy effects in reading with explanatory notes. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 23(1), 1-21.
- Yorke, M. (2003). Formative assessment in higher education: Moves towards theory and the enhancement of pedagogic practice. *Higher Education*, 45(4), 477-501.
- Zaller, J. (1999). *Market competition and news quality*. Paper presented at the Annual meeting of the American Political science Association, Atlanta, GA.
- Zelizer, B. (2004). *Taking journalism seriously: news and the academy*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage.
- Zhang, J., & Heinrich, E. (2005). *Using computers to support formative assessment of assignments*. Paper presented at the ED-Media 2005 World Conference on Educational Multimedia, Hypermedia & Telecommunications, Montreal, Canada.
- Zuber-Skerritt, O. (1992). *Action research in higher education: examples and reflections*. London: Kogan Page.
- Zvacek, S. M. (1999). What's my grade? Assessing learner progress. *TechTrends*, 43(5), 39-43.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1. Articles used for assessment by journalism experts

#### Story 1. ROBBER CHASER HAILED AS HERO

(Published in a regional newspaper in New Zealand)

**He ended up with a smashed nose and horribly sore feet after chasing down a robber and getting beaten for his trouble, but Mu Kaleta thinks it was worth it.**

The animal control officer was hailed as a hero by police yesterday after catching the teenager who tried to steal an elderly woman's handbag in the Auckland suburb of Blockhouse Bay.

He also got a beating from an associate of the robber, who Mr Kaleta thinks was the robber's elder brother, but he refused to let go of the robber.

"I got hit about five or six times by the brother, but he realised I wasn't going to let the guy go," Mr Kaleta, 37, said. "I got blood all over my face after that. My nose was pretty big to start with but the guy who hit me made it even bigger.

"I'm only sorry that because I was holding on to the young guy that I couldn't get a couple of goes back at the guy hitting me."

Police arrived not long after and arrested the robber. They were also looking for the associate who hit Mr Kaleta.

It was only because Mr Kaleta arrived back late in Auckland on Tuesday after a family holiday in Australia's Gold Coast that he was walking down Blockhouse Bay Road at all just before midday rather than at work.

He, his wife Maureen and their children Eli and Grace had just gone for a walk to the local dairy when they saw a teenage boy knock an elderly woman to the ground and steal her handbag.

"My wife gave me a bit of a push and so I chased after him," Mr Kaleta said. "Thankfully he tripped over a couple of times as he was running so I was able to catch up and grab him."

He had to make a trip to his local GP to get his face cleaned up after the incident, but did not need hospital treatment. However, some injuries he received had nothing to do with the blows connected on him.

"I was only wearing flip-flops on my feet and when I started chasing the guy I had to kick them off," he said. "When you've spent most of your working life in socks and shoes your feet get a bit soft, so they were sore after running after the guy on the pavement."

He said he would have no hesitation to do the same thing again if he saw another similar robbery.

"This is my neighbourhood, my community that I live in, and I don't want to see people like this preying on the elderly," Mr Kaleta said. "You can't wait and rely on police to take action all the time. If you're Johnny on the spot you've got to do something."

Police initially said the woman suffered minor injuries but Mr Kaleta said he was told she had broken her arm when she fell to the ground.

Inspector Barry Smalley of the police northern communications centre said Mr Kaleta's action "was an outstanding effort and the dogged determination despite personal injury should not go unnoticed".

#### Story 2. UNRULY PUPILS WORRY SCHOOLS



*(Published in a regional newspaper in New Zealand)*

Teachers worried about safety in the classroom might strike if they do not feel schools are supporting them, a union says.

The Post-Primary Teachers' Association (PPTA) has developed guidelines to protect teacher safety and deal with disruptive and violent students.

PPTA junior vice-president Robin Duff said: "There is a health and safety issue here, and teachers should have the option to strike if they don't feel safe, although we see it as a last option."

The chairman of the Canterbury region of the PPTA, David Ivory, said teachers would not tolerate disruptive behaviour.

"Teacher harassment is becoming more common and low-level verbal abuse has become a common feature in the teaching environment, but that is not to say it is acceptable. At a basic level, it's about a lack of respect," he said.

Figures from the Ministry of Education show 2159 students in Canterbury were stood down and 511 suspended last year.

Most students were disciplined for continual disobedience, but 152 were stood down and 33 suspended for physical assaults on staff.

St. Thomas of Canterbury College principal Bruce Stevenson said one or two students a month were likely to be stood down after abusing teachers.

"We have our share of difficult pupils and I would say we have one or two stand downs a month. If students are verbally abusive to teachers and it can be proved, I will stand them down," he said.

"I think we have a very good pastoral-care system in place which helps us deal with a lot of these issues."

Aranui High School principal John Rohs said he would be worried if his teachers began striking. "I don't really think striking would help a situation. Violent behaviour is an issue in schools because it is an issue in the community. We work closely with other organisations to try to reduce it," he said.

Education Minister Steve Maharey said he could not see strike action being needed.

"I think it (strike action) is totally hypothetical," he said.

"I cannot see it ever being used and I would think if we did see a situation which got as far as strike action, there would have been a failure along the line.

"Disruptive behaviour is an issue – I am not going to argue with that – and the Government has put a lot of money into it."

The PPTA draft guidelines are due to be discussed at its conference next month.

### **Story 3. APARTMENT TURNED INTO A DUMP**

*(Published in a local weekly newspaper in western Belarus, Belarussian money is converted into US dollars)*

Old paper, rotten food and other waste is dumped in an apartment at a multi-storey block of flats in Nakonechnikova Street. The apartment's residents – a couple in their mid-50s – are searching the city rubbish bins, bringing home to sort out what they can recycle for money. They spend the proceeds on alcohol while their neighbours complain about the strong stench from the apartment on the third floor that they have to live with.

The apartment is more than unpleasant to live next to: it is a hazard to people around. It may spread infectious diseases such as typhoid or even anthrax, health inspectors say.

“This is just awful,” a neighbour living next door said. “We always have a terrible smell in our entrance. When we leave our apartment, we are horrified every time that we meet our neighbours. It is unpleasant to talk to them, and it also makes no sense – they are constantly drunk. They bring home not only paper and other rubbish, but also rotten fish, which the Dolphin fish shop is dumping.”

Local policeman Alexander Pronin, city health inspector Marina Shpakova and this correspondent visited the apartment last week at the request of the neighbours. It did not look like a residential flat. The smell was like that of a long abandoned basement filled with some decomposed flesh. A pile of cardboard was left near the entrance, ready for recycling. In the room normally used as a bedroom, dirty papers littered the floor mixed with spare parts of bicycles and filthy old clothes. Piles of similar materials were also stacked ready for recycling.

Speaking with Pronin and Shpakova, the tenants – a 54-year old husband and a 58-year old wife, who looked much older than their age, were aggressive and defensive. They said that they don’t see anything special in what they are doing. Replying to Shpakova, who said that the conditions in the apartment are unsanitary, the wife said, “This is not rubbish. These are my personal belongings. They are not in the way of anyone, they are in my home. We are used to living like this.”

Her husband, who smelled of vodka, added, “I cannot find a job, and we have to earn our living.”

But the neighbours believe that the couple is spending the money they earn off recycling on alcohol. The condominium head confirmed it. “They have been doing this for three years ever since the wife retired. Her husband has not worked for seven years. They say that they earn enough for alcohol, but they do not pay their bills. We would, of course, like everything to be in order. But what I can do? It is just a waste of time to talk to them,” she said and added that the couple’s neighbours had complained to her many times about the constant stink in their entrance.

The residents have a good reason to be worried. Because of such a concentration of litter, Shpakova said, the real danger is looming that the couple – and their neighbours – may get infected with typhoid, tularemia, tetanus and even anthrax. The danger is also that mice, rats and insects will breed and spread throughout the block of flats.

The rules regulating processing and recycling waste say that temporary stacking and sorting out waste, including old clothes and paper, inside residential space is banned and this must be conducted in special premises. The processing of waste must be conducted using special measures, which take into account the presence of bacteria which can spread diseases. The staff performing it must be equipped with special uniforms and must be inoculated.

Shpakova’s “District Centre for Hygiene and Epidemiology” prepared a statement, which will be shortly delivered to the apartment. It obliges the couple to remove all the rubbish from their apartment within the next four weeks, Shpakova said. Otherwise they will be fined in accordance with article 141 of the Belarus Administrative Code and will have to pay from USD 800 to USD 4,200. If they do not pay the fine within 15 days, it will be taken off the pension of the owner of the apartment, who is the wife.

Last year a Baranovich city administration commission considered 56 cases under article 141 of the Belarus Administrative Code similar to this. In the 7 months of this year to date 112 such cases were considered. In most cases, the owners cleaned their apartments. *[Belarus law does not allow for eviction of those who do not pay off their bills or fines].*

#### **Story 4. WHAT HAPPENED IN KONDOPOGA?**

*(Published in a local branch of a Russian most popular national weekly newspaper a week after the event as a news story. Kondopoga is a town of 35,000 people in Karelia - a Russian region north of St. Petersburg neighbouring Finland. “Authorities”, “bratki”, “bratva” are*

*commonly used names for the gang members Azerbaijan is a former USSR republic now a member state of the CIS)*

Only two years ago Moscow human rights people said that Karelia is one of the quietest regions of Russia when it comes to relations between different ethnic groups. And, suddenly like a thunder from a cloudless sky, came the news about mass riots, burned down shops, armed police squads in action and horrible hearsay about the details of the pogroms.

The outline of the events is clear now – a company of local “authorities” were having a party at a local Chaika restaurant at night from Tuesday to Wednesday.

The restaurant is rented out by an Azerbaijan businessman, and he, of course, employed his countrymen to work there. At some point for some reason the “bratki” got angry with the barmen and they cruEllie beat him up. The police were summoned, but the culprits had already left, so the police also left. However, very shortly a different set of guests arrived – as it appeared, the beaten businessman summoned local Chechens to help.

The Chechens, without any effort to sort the conflict out, started a brawl that turned into a fight with knives. In the end, two people were killed on the spot, eight people ended up in hospitals. Next day several shops were burned down. On Sept. 1 the killed people were buried, and the same night several other shops were burned. Special armed police were called up to patrol the city, but it looks like that police underestimated the threats.

On Sept. 2 about 2,000 people gathered for a mass meeting. The meeting resolution was prepared with the help of Moscow nationalists, who hastily arrived in Karelia, and that is why it came out extremely against people from the Caucasus.

After the meeting, towards evening, several thousand drunken youths, managed to make their way to the ill-fated restaurant and burned it down. Then they set fire to the city market and were stopped only by very strict actions by the special police.

Alltogether over a 100 people were detained and later released. Twenty five of them were arrested. All the leadership of the region arrived in the town. As it emerged, the alleged Chechen killers, who started the pogroms, were finally detained on Sept. 3.

First, it was reported, that the public had detained them, but unofficially it was known from the very beginning, that the suspects were surrendered by the Chechen diaspora. This was later confirmed by Sergei Katanandov, governor of Karelia.

Chechens claim that the roots of the conflict are purely economic. The local “bratva” is trying to push businessmen from the Caucasus out of their town. About 200 people from the Caucasus left Kondopoga.

The case was taken up by the Karelian Prosecutor’s Office and the unrest started to die down.

How could it happen that what was originally some pure crime turned into mass riots and then into real pogroms? Naturally, the ethnic heart of the conflict was established by the fighting – locals against Chechens, but the channels by which the information was getting out of the town happened to be specific.

Local police quite awkwardly tried not to mention the nationalities of the fighting participants, and then local youth through the Internet started to contact federal media, public organizations, parties, parliament deputies and so on. The first to react to the events were nationalists, who sent their representatives to Kondopoga.

None of the Moscow-based human rights people, or Russian democrats, who are often accused of ignoring the problems of ethnic Russian people, appeared next to the shocked and angry residents of the small Karelian town.

The “kind” nationalists had only to redirect a little the emotions of those who came to the meeting, pointing them to the direction the nationalists favoured. And now they will remain in the memory of the local people as the most honest, sympathetic and quick to help.

There is no doubt that the nationalists will establish their branches here. Very soon elections of local deputies will take place, and there is no doubt that the events in Kondopoga have paved the way for the nationalists, who only recently had no chances to win in this multi-national and multi-confessional republic.

#### **Story 5. GENE-TWEAKED GRASS ON LOOSE IN OREGON**

*(Published in a daily newspaper in Oregon in September. Madras and Corvallis are towns in Oregon)*

#### **GENE-TWEAKED GRASS ON LOOSE IN OREGON**

##### **Modified crops - Pollen has spread and bred with wild plants, sparking fear of a superweed**

Discovery of genetically modified bentgrass in the wild in Central Oregon -- the first known transgenic crop escape in the United States -- has fulfilled critics' warnings and raised the threat of contaminating the state's nation-leading grass seed crop.

Environmentalists and some conventional seed growers had predicted that humans couldn't hope to rein in movement of the plant's pollen and seeds, so tiny they number 6 million a pound. Although backers of the modified grass seed hope to revolutionize golf course maintenance, opponents say the revolution comes at the risk of creating a superweed resistant to a relatively benign herbicide.

Corvallis scientists discovered two years ago that the experimental Madras crop had sent pollen more than a dozen miles away. Their latest finding that the modified plants had crossed with wild grasses outside a buffer area is due out in the October issue of *Molecular Ecology*.

Although discounted by the company hoping to win federal approval of the grass strain, the discovery is prompting "I told you so" responses from conventional grass seed growers and environmentalists who oppose its commercialization.

"Exactly the things we were most worried about seem to be true," said Jim Diamond, former chairman of the Sierra Club's Genetic Engineering Committee.

In Oregon, which has \$373.5 million in annual grass seed sales, conventional growers fear transgenic seeds will contaminate their crops. That could curtail export markets -- roughly 30 percent of sales -- because some countries refuse to accept genetically modified strains.

The creeping bentgrass strain, developed in partnership between Scotts Miracle-Gro Co. and Monsanto Co., is designed to resist the herbicide Roundup, the world's most widely used plant-killer. Golf courses could plant the seed and keep other grass varieties in check by spraying Roundup.

Jim King, a Scotts spokesman, said the study's conclusions weren't surprising. "The fact that nature kind of took its course was exactly what you would have expected to happen," King said.

Scotts has waited more than two years for an arm of the U.S. Department of Agriculture to decide whether to deregulate the crop, opening the door to seed sales. A seed crop was harvested in Madras and bagged, but the fields were cleared and Scotts attempted to eradicate plants that escaped by applying herbicides other than Roundup. King said he was unsure how the new study would affect federal review of the grass strain.

He noted points that the company has made before: Trimmed grass on golf courses is highly unlikely to reach heights to produce seed or pollen, and even if it were to spread, bentgrass should not be considered an invasive species.

But for grass seed growers such as Wirth of Tangent, an invasion of hard-to-kill bentgrass in his ryegrass or fescue fields could spell catastrophe. Wirth worries that bentgrass, unlike Roundup-resistant strains of corn or soybeans, can remain dormant in soil for more than a

decade and spring up. "These cultivated crops will quit growing after a year or two, but bentgrass would be there forever," he said.

The study, led by Jay Reichman, an Environmental Protection Agency toxicologist, found that nine genetically modified plants were discovered among 20,400 samples taken. The samples were found as far as three miles outside the control area established for the crop's cultivation -- in other words, well outside a buffer designed to prevent the escape of seeds and pollen.

Of the nine plants, two were found in the Crooked River National Grassland area. A study abstract did not detail how many of the nine plants were the result of seeds drifting or from cross-breeding with wild grass.

### **Story 6. HI-TECH SCAM HITS TOURISTS; BRUSH WITH FRAUD**

*(Published in a regional newspaper in Canterbury, New Zealand)*

Kiwi tourists are among the estimated 48,000 victims of a hi-tech credit-card scam in Thailand that could cost international banks up to \$15 million in stolen credit.

The scam targeted foreign tourists in the popular Phuket area by wire-tapping phone lines to intercept credit-card data, before it reached banks.

Banks in New Zealand reacted quickly, cancelling the cards of tourists who might have been targeted. Visa International spokesman Iain Jamieson said card-fraud specialists from New Zealand had helped crack the ring.

"It was New Zealand and Australian card-fraud teams at banks that noticed some interesting spending patterns."

Staff had worked with police in Phuket, where the wire-tapping scanner was found, he said. Wire-tapping was a rare type of fraud, and it was difficult to trace, Jamieson said. "It is very new and very sophisticated. It was one of only three we have seen," he said.

The tapper was used to "snoop" on telecommunications lines, and pick up credit-card details, turning them into analog numbers. About 48,000 card-holders had been adversely affected by the scam, which ran from May to July, Jamieson said.

Last week, a Bangkok man, Tossapol Chaowanawuth, 42, was arrested in connection with the scam. Police said more arrests were likely. Sixty million Thai baht (\$NZ2.5m) had been lost, with a suspected further \$13m worth of transactions being investigated.

Thai tourist police commander Colonel Panya Mamen alleged Chaowanawuth was part of a transnational gang of credit-card thieves. The gang had intercepted the credit-card details on phone lines and converted the analog numbers into data put on MP3 players. The data was then sent to a gang leader in Malaysia, who transferred the information on to forged credit-cards which were taken back to Thailand to use.

ANZ spokesman Craig Howie said these types of credit-card scams were "not particularly out of the ordinary". "It's an issue we always take seriously and have systems in place to deal with those situations," he said.

Westpac spokesman Mark Watts said such scams were continuing, and often forced the bank to be proactive. "If we suspect a group of cards may be compromised, we may block or suspend them immediately," he said.

Banks put a "huge human and technological effort" into protecting credit-cards, but it was hard to monitor. "Our monitoring and security are extremely sophisticated. Regretfully, the criminals are very innovative." In any cases where there had been fraud or criminal activity that was in no way the fault of customers, the bank would recover costs, Watts said.

Thailand was recently listed seventh in the top-10 card-fraud hot spots in the world by a British financial website. Italy, France and the United States featured in the top five, with Turkey ranked as the worst location for card fraud.

In the Asia-Pacific region, Visa lost about \$US152m (\$NZ248m) to credit-card fraud in 2005, a 5 per cent increase from 2004. Globally, fraud-related losses jumped 19% to \$US2.4 billion last year.

Tips for beating card fraud overseas:

- \* Keep your card within your sight - even when making purchases.
- \* Keep all of your receipts from transactions.
- \* Ask retailers to confirm the amount being debited.
- \* Ensure no-one can see you enter your personal identification number (PIN).
- \* Report lost or stolen cards immediately.

### **Story 7. ANGARSK PENSIONERS ARE SECRETLY FINED FOR NON-EXISTENT DEBTS**

*(Article was published in a local weekly newspaper in Angarsk, a town in Siberia with the population of 250,000 people. Subsistence minimum in Angarsk – USD 130 a month. All the dollars in the article have been converted to USD. A labour veteran is an honorary title given in Russia to the best in their profession after they retire)*

A labour veteran Anna Korneyeva, together with the other local veterans, was promised a bonus of \$7 for Victory Day [May 9] from President Vladimir Putin. Making plans for the money, she waited. But first came a surprise: Last Friday [May 4] she was told to pay a fine.

«We are withholding \$8 from your pension for your debt for electricity», she recalled an officer of the local pension fund saying in a telephone call.

«But I don't have any debts!», exploded Korneyeva. Her relatives later said they had to call an ambulance to help the old woman, whose pension is \$95 a month, to treat her for heart failure. Korneyeva is one of six Angarsk pensioners, who, according to the pension fund, were sentenced by a local magistrate to pay non-existent debts to the local power grid ATSK in April, when such cases started to crop up.

Pensioners fall victims of two problems, officials say. One is the ATSK and another is the magistrates, who are violating the procedures of a so-called simplified court ruling. Such ruling can take place without any hearing or even the presence of the parties, but the magistrates ignore an important part of this procedure. They do not provide a copy of the ruling to the people accused within 10 days after a ruling is issued, so that they can present proof of their innocence and have the ruling cancelled.

Out of 26 cases ATSK filed in April, six were made over non-existent debts and already three such complaints have been received in May, said Olga Ponomaryova, a pension fund's payment department officer. In addition to the fines, pensioners have to pay \$10 in state fees to the court.

«ATSK keeps filing to the court, the judges make the ruling, we are withholding the money, but finally it appears people don't have debts», Ponomaryova said and sighed. Withholding part of pensions is a routine method to make indebted pensioners pay off their debts not only for power, but also for the rent of their state apartments and for other communal services, she said. Over 500 local pensioners – about 6 percent of all pensioners - are getting only a fraction of their pensions. However paying for non-existing debt is something new, she added.

ATSK considers the problem to be just some trivia. «We have over 100,000 clients,» - said ATSK deputy head Vladimir Pakhotin. «If someone has a problem they can come to the No. 106 office here and we will sort it out and take measures.»

However, not all elderly people are physically able to do what he suggested.

«I tried to sort it out with them,» said pensioner Galina Gorina, 72, who said she got a notification in April on the withdrawal of half of her pension for a non-existent debt for electricity dating back to December last year. «I stood in a long queue in the ATSK office, and then they were extremely rude to me. But why on earth was the decision taken in my absence and now I, a disabled person, have to rush around their offices to correct someone's mistake?» Gorina is sick with arthritis and can hardly walk.

Guilty or not, pensioners will anyway have to go around and prove their innocence, said a lawyer of the local «Yurist» legal company Tatiana Dyomina. She said that if pensioners have not got a copy of the judge's ruling they may complain to the city court. Then, if the court overrules the magistrate's decision, pensioners will need to file suits against ATSK to have the damage repaid.

Old people have to do all this work because the magistrates failed to do theirs, Dyomina said. In addition to providing the debtors with a copy of the ruling, the magistrates also did not explain the pensioners their rights and did not let them prove they paid their bills. In this case they must have cancelled their ruling, Dyomina added.

The magistrates, who made the ruling for Gorina and Korneyeva, refused to comment. Head of the city court Natalya Sukhanova said that she will take a look into the problem which, she said, was unfamiliar to her. «If the defendants haven't got the ruling, it is a violation of the law. In this case people should bring us their complaints. We will check it out and if found guilty, the magistrate will be punished», Sukhanova said.

But 83-year-old Korneyeva is lying in bed at home with high blood pressure. She says it is hardly likely she will be able to get up and fight for her rights. If she does not get better, then a quarter of her pension – the debt, and the state fee for the court ruling – will be transferred to ATSK and the state.

The looming President's bonus is a cold comfort for her. After she pays all her other bills, she will be left with only about \$27.

It is just a little more than one dollar a day.

## **Story 8. 'THEY'RE ALIVE!' MINERS FOUND**

*(Published in a regional newspaper in Florida. Please note that you are supposed to know when assessing this story that the miners were dead, not alive)*

In an extraordinary twist of fate, 12 miners caught in an explosion in a coal mine were found alive late Tuesday, more than 41 hours after the blast.

Bells at a church where relatives had been gathering rang out as family members ran out screaming in jubilation.

Relatives yelled "They're alive!"

"They told us they have 12 alive," Gov. Joe Manchin said. "We have some people that are going to need some medical attention."

A few minutes after word came, the throng, several hundred strong, broke into a chorus of the hymn How Great Thou Art, in a chilly, night air.

"Miracles happen in West Virginia and today we got one," said Charlotte Weaver, wife of Jack Weaver, one of the men who had been trapped in the mine. "I got scared a lot of times, but I couldn't give up," she said. "We have an 11-year-old son, and I couldn't go home and tell him, 'Daddy wasn't coming home.'"

One miner was found dead earlier Tuesday, said the mine's owner, International Coal Group Inc. He was not immediately identified.

There were hugs and tears among the crowd outside the Sago Baptist Church near the mine, about 100 miles northeast of Charleston. A relative at the church said a mine foreman called relatives there, saying the miners had been found.

The miners had been trapped 260 feet below the surface of the mine after an explosion early Monday. Rescue crews found one body Tuesday evening and said they were holding out hope that the others were still alive, even as precious time continued to slip away. The unidentified body was found about 700 feet from a mine car, and it appeared the employee was working on a beltline, which brings coal out of the mine, said Ben Hatfield, chief executive officer for ICG of Ashland, Ky.

Earlier Tuesday, the prospects of finding any of the miners alive appeared bleak after holes drilled into the ground yielded deadly levels of carbon monoxide and no signs of life. "With each hour that passes, the likelihood of a successful outcome diminishes," said Ben Hatfield, chief executive of mine owner International Coal Group Inc.

"We are clearly in a situation where we need a miracle," he said. "But miracles do happen."

The men were believed to be about 12,000 feet past the opening of the mine shaft. By early evening, about 35 hours after the blast, rescue teams had penetrated 11,400 feet, working their way on foot for fear machinery might cause volatile gases to explode. The company told families that a powerful explosion had rocked the mine, based on damage near where the miners may be trapped, said Rick McGee, who works at the mine with his brother-in-law, Randal McCloy.

Company officials said the cause of the blast, powerful enough to knock down concrete blocks used to direct air flow in inside the mine, was unknown. Company officials have refused to speculate on the cause of the blast, but the governor's office said it might have been caused by lightning.

Given the information about the explosion, McGee said, "There's a chance, not a great chance, but there is still a chance" that the miners could still be alive if they were able to barricade themselves. On a raw and rainy day, townsfolk gathered on a muddy field across the Buckhannon River and Sago Road from the mine, where rescue teams worked deep beneath a wooded ridge. Nick Helms talked about his father, Terry, the fire boss of the trapped crew, calling him a loving dad who pushed his son to make a good life in the sunshine.

"He would do anything in his power to keep me out of the mines," said Helms, 25, a golf pro in Myrtle Beach, S.C. "He didn't want me to risk my life trying to support a family. That's what he's done for 25 years now."

For decades, sons have followed fathers into the mines. "It's as good a paying job as you'll find around this area," said Ted Johnson, who said he went into the mines at the age of 18 and has worked underground for nearly 22 years. His father worked as a coal miner for 35 years.

"You take a chance every time you go in," he admitted. "But you also take a chance every time you take a vehicle out on the highway."

Chris Barlow estimated that his friend, Terry Helms, "pulled down about \$65,000 a year working on the cat-eye shift" in the Sago (pronounced SAY-go) Mine. On Monday, he said, Helms' shift began at 3 a.m. and he expected to work for 12 to 14 hours.

In Upshur County, schools were closed Tuesday as the whole community worried together. "Pray for Our Miners," said the marquee on the Bicentennial Inn and dozens of other establishments.

Inside a white clapboard Baptist church, fretful folks congregated and sang old-time hymns of hope.



"The Old Rugged Cross. I Saw the Light. Amazing Grace. I don't think the piano ever stopped playing," said Barbary Chaapel, whose neighbors and distant kin are among the trapped miners.

Groves, brother of trapped miner Jerry Groves, 57, said relatives were thinking the worst after the governor spoke with families Tuesday evening. "He said the odds are against us. It's not hopeful," Groves said as he fought back tears. "I think everybody knows based on what they told us, what we are looking at."

After hearing the bleak assessments, many family members retreated to the nearby Sago Baptist Church. Hundreds had spent the night huddled in tents or wrapped in blankets in the cool, damp air.

"That don't sound good," said a red-eyed Donald Marsh, who kept an all-night vigil across from the mine where his half-brother, Jim Bennett, was trapped.

At first, rescue crews moved slowly through the shaft, because they had to stabilize it and repair the roof as they went along. But on Tuesday, officials said, the rescuers realized they had no time to waste and abandoned that approach.

In Washington, President Bush offered federal help for the effort to bring the miners out alive. "May God bless those who are trapped below the earth," he said.

### **Story 9. WAITING LIST CUT 'WILL KILL'; SPECIALIST ISSUES CANCER WARNING**

*(Published in a regional daily newspaper in Christchurch, New Zealand)*

Patients with undiagnosed bowel cancer will be among 2500 to be dumped from Christchurch Hospital waiting lists and some will die, a specialist warns.

About 1000 patients awaiting a colonoscopy - a procedure for diagnosing bowel cancer - are likely to be taken off waiting lists as the Canterbury District Health Board (CDHB) falls into line with Government policy to restrict the waiting time to six months, The Press was told yesterday.

New Zealand has the highest rate of bowel cancer in the world - a condition that kills about 22 people every week.

Christchurch Hospital professor of colorectal surgery Frank Frizelle said the threatened cuts had left doctors angry and upset.

"If you take 1000 people off the waiting list, some will have cancer, and, if it's not caught early, people will die," he said.

Reducing waiting lists to six months would mean axing not only routine and semi-urgent cases but also some urgent patients, or those with symptoms of suspected bowel cancer.

"If it wasn't so serious it would be funny," Frizelle said.

The cull was driven by a need to balance the books, not best medical practice, he said. "The money spent on health is inadequate to provide a realistic level of health care for New Zealanders. It's very frightening."

Frizelle said Christchurch Hospital had enough equipment to meet demand but was not paying for enough staff time to perform colonoscopies. "We used to do extra waiting lists on Saturdays and in the evenings to keep up, but they've stopped those and the lists are growing as a result," he said.

Christchurch's two colorectal surgeons were working unpaid to try to meet patient demand, he said. Frizelle believed Canterbury people were "not getting a good deal from the health system" because specialist care offered to patients outside the district was not adequately reimbursed.

Nationally, the Health Ministry has called for 17,000 patients to be culled, with the largest single cut in Canterbury. The Auckland, Waitemata and Capital and Coast district health boards followed, with each needing to remove more than 2000 patients from their lists. Canterbury axed 4400 patients from hospital waiting lists last year.

CDHB chief executive Gordon Davies said the health board was not funded to offer colonoscopies to people who had a family history of bowel cancer but no symptoms. He said efforts were being made to cut waiting lists by removing patients who no longer needed elective surgery or did not meet criteria for a specialist assessment for a range of reasons.

"We're trying to sort them sensibly and we're liaising with GPs on how to do it," he said. Davies said the waiting-list policy had been in place since 1996, but not accepted by surgeons.

Cancer Society president Richard Gray said it would be unnerving for people to be told they could not have the colonoscopy they were waiting for. "People in that anxious situation should be getting the assistance they require. It's a tragedy that they are not," he said.

National MP Tony Ryall said people at risk of bowel cancer should have an opportunity to see a specialist.

"Surgeons are saying that people will die because of those culls and senior specialists have described it as dangerous and risky, but Mr Hodgson says these people will be better off back with their GP," he said.

Health Minister Pete Hodgson did not respond to a request for comment.

#### **Story 10. THE LOCAL BRANCH OF TOJIKSODIROTBANK IS PREPARED TO INCREASE LOANS**

*(Published in January 2005 in a weekly newspaper in Gorny Badakhshan, or GBAO, which is a remote region in Tajikistan, high in the mountains at the border with Afghanistan. One US dollar is equivalent to three somoni (local money))*

Giving loans to businesses and entrepreneurs from the side of the Tojiksodirotbank doubled.

Giving loans to businesses and individuals will carry on in the month of February, like it used to be in the previous years, said head of the Khorog branch of Tojiksodirotbank Ulugbek Otambekov. The difference is only in the size of the loan, this year it will be bigger

"If in 2003 the sum the bank gave in loans was only 226,000 somoni, in 2004 it increased to 400,000 somoni," said chief accountant of Tojiksodirotbank Badavlat Sarbalandov.

"For businessmen who are busy trading with goods the size of the loan is limited to 15,000 somoni, which is equivalent to \$US5,000," Sarbalandov said. There is no limit on loans to businesses. Naturally, if the business can prove its targets and provide sufficient collateral. The interest rate for the loan is decreasing each year. If in 2003 it was 39.08 percent, in the new 2005 it will become 34.02 percent.

"The terms of paying off the loan given by other banks are very limited, and also because Khorog is very far from big markets we have no practical opportunities to turn over the money and get profits," businessman Khursand Bakhtaliyev said. "The loans also become loss-making for us, and the loans that Tojiksodirotbank is offering, with the increase of the size of the loans and the terms of paying them off will let us effectively use the loan and obtain certain profits."

"The increase of the lenders respectively allows the bank to expand its activities and to increase the obtained dividends," Otambekov said.

"We intend in the future, with the decrease of our expenses and increase of our profits, to lower the interest rate to all our clients," Otambekov said.

## Appendix 2. Instruction for coders

This instruction was provided to the coders, who assessed the quality of news articles, presented in Appendix 1.

Dear Mr/Ms \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you very much for taking the time to participate in this research.

You are asked **to read and assess several news articles** of varying quality, most of them from 500 to 800 words long, written by journalists in different countries. The articles will be offered for you to read in the order defined by the table of random numbers.

First, please familiarise yourself with the news texts assessment (NTA).

After this, please **read** the first article

Then, please **assess the quality of the article** using the NTA:

- **highlight the relevant description** in one of the appropriate cells of each criteria if you use the Word version of the NTA, or underline if you use the printed out text. Please choose **one or several relevant descriptions** in the cells with many descriptions;

- if you think the right **description is missing**, please **write down the description** you think is appropriate **in the 'comment' line** in the relevant column;

- if you have any other **suggestions on the descriptions in the cells**, including their **wording or you question their placement in a particular cell**, please give them in the 'comment' line;

- if some of the criteria are **not applicable** for some of the stories, just **ignore** them;

Next, please **assess the overall quality** of the article on the 5-point scale by ticking the little box at the end of the NTA (**5 is the best quality and 1 is the worst and you can also use decimal points**). Please use as **wide a range of scores** as you feel is appropriate.

**The procedure for the second article is shorter. First, please read it.**

Then, without using the NTA, please, **assess its overall quality** on the 5-point scale and the **quality of the categories in the table on page #6 (5 is the best quality and 1 is the worst, and you can also use decimal points)**.

Lastly, please **do the same** for the next **pairs** of articles **in the following order**:

# – full assessment

# – short assessment

# – full assessment

# – short assessment

# – full assessment

# – short assessment

# – full assessment

# – short assessment

**Thank you very much for your assistance!**

## Appendix 3. News Texts Assessment (NTA1)

Table 26. News texts assessment

NEWSWORTHINESS
----------------

<b>Timeliness</b>				
The 'when' question is not addressed where necessary; or news is older than 24 hours from the previous deadline for daily newspapers; or older than 'today' for digital news resources	Timeliness is unclear; or current and explanatory news have no indication of time or no news peg	In hard news timeliness is mentioned lower than in the second paragraph; or current/explanatory news has a news peg; or story could have been easily published on another day	Time cue is provided in the first two paragraphs indicating that news is no older than 24 hours from the previous deadline for daily newspapers; or no older than 'today' for digital media; or in current/explanatory news timeliness is given in the first four paragraphs of the story	News alert about genuine occurrence, incident or utterance is posted within 30 minutes after it occurred
<b>Importance</b>				
News is not important to news consumers; or its importance is not formulated where it is needed to understand why the story should be read	News is important to a few people only; or the explanation of its importance is unclear; or the importance of news for people is not specified where needed	News is important to a limited number or small groups of news consumers; or the explanation of its importance has a small deficiency; or it is wrongly placed	News is clearly important to many or most news consumers; or its implicit importance is explained in a graph high in the story	News is of key importance to all news consumers addressing top problems faced by the world, nation, society, or community
<b>Proximity</b>				
News has nothing to do with the readership; or the "where?" is not addressed	News has little relevance to the readership; or description of proximity or relevance are unclear; or local angle is provided unnecessarily	'Good' level of performance has a minor deficiency	News happened in the area; or involves a resident of the area; or a local organisation	Important non-local news has been provided with local angle where relevant
<b>Prominence</b>				
Names of celebrities, VIP or well-known institutions or businesses are used	Celebrities, VIP or well-known institutions or businesses	Performance in the 'good' level has minor deficiency, or	Well-known institutions, businesses, VIP or celebrities are	Story deals with a high-profile case, which attracts or has the potential to

irrelevantly	mentioned in the story have little to do with the news	well-known people, institutions, businesses etc comment on a secondary issue	the subject or sources for the story and are quoted or referred to, or comment on the main news	attract substantial local, national or international attention
<b>Unexpectedness</b>				
“An event took place” angle is chosen	Story did not take a new angle where necessary; or news is about something that did not happen	News is an ordinary or a scheduled event or occurrence	News is sudden and unexpected, including that something important that was expected did not happen	News is extremely unusual unique or exclusive
<b>Conflict</b>				
The real conflict, controversy, or tension between some powerful forces is missed; or is irrelevant; or was created for no apparent reason	Negative occurrence; or conflict or tension is not shown where it is relevant; or it is mixed up	Descriptions in the ‘good’ level have minor deficiencies in explicitness; or relevance	Story gives explicit and relevant description of negative occurrence; or conflict; or tension between some powerful forces; or between these forces and people, or between people; or fears	First-hand reporting from war or dangerous areas
<b>General interest</b>				
Story is incomprehensible or makes no sense	Story is boring	At least several paragraphs are worth reading	Story sustains interest throughout; an average reader can identify with the news	Story is able to engage a reader who had no previous interest in the issue to read it to the end or almost to the end
<b>FACTUAL QUALITY AND CREDIBILITY</b>				
<b>Accuracy</b>				
Story misleads; or misinforms; or contains very serious factual errors; or fabrications; or story from a war or conflict zone gives operational details; or story otherwise puts lives at risk; or story violates laws except when it is in the public interest	Story contains confusing, inconsistent or questionable material including in headlines; or unsupported material that does not come from a top official; or factual mistakes including	All facts and figures have been obtained from competent relevant sources and are consistent throughout the story; or unsubstantiated statements by top officials are appended with explanation of	All facts and figures have been obtained from at least two primary competent sources independent from each other, and are consistent throughout the story, facts are verifiable and	Except the descriptions in the ‘good’ level, story contains evidence that sensitive, error-prone, controversial or dubious information has been additionally checked with an independent source

	confusing maths, wrong addresses, names and titles; or contains exaggerations or sensationalism; or incorrect meaning of words is used	why hard evidence is not provided	undeniable, all claims are supported by evidence	
<b>Description of sources</b>				
Description of sources is not provided where necessary; or it shows that sources lack authority; or they are apparently incompetent or irrelevant; or sources have a conflict of interests; or they comment outside of their expertise; or anonymous source is used without description; or justification	Description of sources is unclear or insufficient to judge their authority; competence; independence; and relevance; or unjustifiably used are: age; ethnicity; race; faith; disability; or other labelling descriptions; or anonymity is granted without a clear reason or explaining the reason; or the motivation of an anonymous source to disclose information is not given where necessary; or information is attributed to a group (e.g.: 'sources say') without further elaboration	Description of sources is mostly clear; or it is excessive and 'speed bumps' reading, sources' possible bias is clearly specified in the text, it is explained where needed why a source requested anonymity or was granted anonymity	Description of sources including anonymous ones is short but sufficient to trust their authority, competence, independence and relevance, explanation why a high-ranking source was granted anonymity is provided in the text	Except attributes in the 'good' level, the description of sources shows that information or comments come from the best possible sources with direct knowledge of the subject
<b>Comprehensiveness</b>				
Story has big gaps, significant facts are missing that may raise false expectations; or all or some of the 'what', 'who', 'when' or 'where' questions are left unanswered	Story is clogged with facts or figures; or story is too long for its worth; or contains nonsense or empty talk; or examples or anecdotes are not given where	If important facts are missing story gives the reason of their absence; or coverage has some insignificant gaps	'What', 'who', 'when' and 'where' are clear, main costs are given where necessary, all significant information is given and specific issues, relevant to the	News is fully covered, appropriate examples and anecdotes are given where necessary and they are not clogging the story, and the limitations of news is given

	they are necessary to explain or illustrate complicated news		subject (beat, round), are covered	where relevant
<b>Objectivity as a method</b>				
Story contains plagiarism, advertisement, propaganda, partisanship, PR, or manipulation or it looks like it may have been paid for; or ethical rules are violated without addressing the issue; or journalist is involved with the story or participates in it; or no imposed censorship is mentioned	Story contains unchallenged allegations; accusations; exaggerations; assumptions; conjecture; loaded words; hyped emotions; or opinions are presented as facts; or story is one-sided on a contentious issue, biased or unbalanced without justification; or journalist writes in the first person; or editorialises; boasts; lectures or patronises; or stereotypes are used that stigmatise minorities; or labeling descriptions that may be offensive politically; ethnically; or religiously; or otherwise are used outside a quote from authoritative source	Except descriptions in the 'good' level, if some needed comments are missing, including on the controversy, story gives an explanation of it; or story emphasises conflict rather than ways to resolve it	Information is presented in a neutral way; facts and opinions are separated; in contentious stories all leading sides are represented high in the story, close to each other, and are balanced where relevant	In contentious stories comments of all relevant parties are accompanied by comment of at least one independent competent expert
<b>Circumstances</b>				
Confusing or misleading descriptions of the circumstances in which information was obtained are provided makes it	No circumstances in which information was obtained are provided where they are	Descriptions of the circumstances are insufficient, or too long; or provided unnecessarily	Circumstances in which information was obtained are provided if information was obtained in	Except descriptions in the 'good' level, the circumstances are given in a concise way and are integrated in the text in

impossible to trust information	necessary to trust the information and there is a reason to suggest that it was obtained in circumstances other than in a face-to-face interview or by phone from a local non-VIP source in the same city		unusual circumstances including not in a face-to-face interview or by phone from a local non-VIP source based in the same location, and the circumstances are relevant to the story; or they are not provided if they are usual or obvious	unobtrusively
<b>Attribution to sources except attribution in the intro</b>				
Attributions to sources is missing for all new information; and for all controversial information; or passive attribution of the kind 'it is understood' is used	Attributions are unclear or confusing, e.g.: individual statements are attributed to a group of people; or other than 'said' attribution verb is used without a reason; or two or more consequent paragraphs unnecessarily start from the attribution to the source	Attributions are used too low to immediately understand where information is coming from; or are given unnecessarily; or the order of identification of a source is inappropriate	Attributions to sources are made for all new and for all controversial information	All necessary attributions are in place and if the same sources are referred to later and a reader may have forgotten them, their relevance is repeated
<b>MEANING</b>				
<b>Context</b>				
Contextual information is irrelevant; or confusing	Contextual information is missing where needed and news is presented as a single occurrence	Contextual information is insufficient; or too long for what news is worth; or is placed too low; or too high	News is placed in the context that gives it meaning, and complications are explained where needed	Except the descriptions in the 'good' level, multiple but short contexts are given and comparisons are made where relevant
<b>Explanations</b>				
One or all of the issues of why did news happen? how did it happen? what happens next? are not provided which makes it hard or impossible to grasp	Story is in-depth on news which is not worth such coverage; or explanations contain major deficiencies	Coverage of one or all of the issues of 'why', 'how', 'what happens next' has minor deficiencies, or these blocks are	Story gives sufficient explanations of 'why did news happen', 'how did it happen' and 'what happens/may	Story provides relevant explicit in-depth explanations on why?, how?, what happens next? from the best sources including, where relevant, on



news		located too high; or too low	happen next' where necessary	the rationale behind important issues addressed in the story; and has the potential to stimulate important discussions in society
Impact				
No harm, danger or other kinds of life- or well-being threatening impact that news may have on people is mentioned when necessary, or the story promotes or encourages criminal acts, self-destructive or otherwise bad behaviour	Impact of news on main stakeholder or stakeholders is not shown; or it is wrong; or it is otherwise inappropriate; or not given where necessary; or given where unnecessary or obvious	Descriptions in the 'good' level has minor deficiencies; or coverage of impact is limited to only main stakeholder; or impact is explained before the WWWWH are covered	Story explains what news means to its direct stakeholders including people; society; organisations; minorities; environment; and other life forms; formations; and, if needed, on other relevant matters; and issues	Story clearly outlines not only its current impact, but also potential problems for people and main stakeholders; hazards; harm; negative chain effects; or any other serious consequences news may cause
<b>Practical use</b>				
Story does not offer practical advice when it is necessary; or makes no effort to look for solution of an important problem	Story poses questions rather than gives solutions; or practical advice or solutions have major deficiencies; including suggesting simple solutions to complex problems	Recommendations or practical advice given in a story have minor deficiencies; or solution to a problem is incomplete or has other minor deficiencies	Story gives competent practically useful recommendations	Competent applicable solution to a problem is offered if necessary
<b>Voices of people in the street</b>				
No opinions or comments on the news by ordinary people with no direct involvement in news are given where they are necessary	Ordinary people's comments are irrelevant to news; or they are misleading; or people comment on secondary issues; or comments are deficient in other major ways	At least one opinion or comment by a relevant ordinary person with no direct involvement with news is given on the main news item where relevant; or descriptions used in the 'good' level have a minor	Opposite viewpoints or comments are given on the main news item by ordinary people with no direct involvement in the news but who can identify themselves with news	Opinions on the news or comments come from a variety of people of different gender, race, religion or ethnicity with no direct involvement in news where relevant

		deficiency		
<b>STYLE</b>				
<b>Reporter's voice</b>				
Story is written off a press release or press releases only; or using only one source or sources of one origin	Too much of a press release, quotes or PR information is used, or too much power is given to statements by officials; or reporter's own angle is weaker than the primary source's, or it is irrelevant	The journalist's own voice is not strong enough throughout the whole story and is influenced by sources	The story may have been originated by an official or corporate source or news announcement, but reporter developed it as his/her own story where relevant	Journalist pursued an original (but relevant) angle for a story
<b>Details</b>				
No details or descriptions are used where they are needed to clarify the story; or instead of specific details used are general phrases; or banalities; or well known facts	Irrelevant details are used; or the details are obvious; or dull; or abstract; or out of focus; or text is littered with overlong descriptions	Some concrete and specific details are used	Sufficient effect of presence is created by creating relevant images; or descriptions of sounds; scents; colours; details of clothes; etc.	Details appeal to the senses of the reader, helping to understand people's strong feelings or problems
<b>Use of language</b>				
Cynicism, irony, cliché, slang, ambiguity, lingo, official or technical jargon, tabloidese, bad taste or vulgar language is used; or offensive language including expletives is used outside quotes from top national leaders or local leaders if deemed newsworthy by the editorial decision.	Language is too wordy, too dry, confusing, complex, weak, uncertain, abstract, general, or euphemisms, tautologies or repetitions, or needless adjectives are used; or abbreviations without explanations are used when they are not common knowledge; or more than two figures are used in one sentence	Language has minor problems, e.g. passive voice is once used where active voice is appropriate; or one sentence contains two separate thoughts; or long words are used when short ones are available	Language is easy-flowing, direct, concise, simple and conversational, clear and to the point; one idea is used per paragraph; strong verbs and the best most precise words are used; numbers show change where possible; active voice is used wherever possible; or use of passive voice is justified	Story is written with flair, energy and creativity, including using power of contrasts, juxtapositions and pacing
<b>Use of quotes</b>				
Story has no quotes where they are	Quotes contain official or banal	Messages in the quotes are too	Quotations are relevant to the	Quotes are off-beat, or add drama to the

relevant; or they make no sense; or are misleading; unbalanced; odd, defamatory; or accusatory from people not in official capacity; or contain several statements; or are out of the context; or a quote was doctored; or a message in a partial quote may be understood differently from its direct meaning	statements or facts rather than comment or judgment; or are boring or contain common sense; or are unclear; or too many quotes are used; or they contain more than one idea	weak; or quotes are too wordy for their worth; or too long	story, interesting, relevant and deliver one complete idea, or add spice, and they are short unless a matter of high importance must be put on record	story
<b>Grammar</b>				
Text needs a lot of editing for grammar, spelling or style	Text contains stylistic, spelling or grammatical mistakes	Text may contain a typo, but no grammatical or stylistic mistakes	Text has no typos or mistakes in style or grammar	Text needs no subediting
<b>STRUCTURE</b>				
<b>Intro</b>				
Misses news, or misses an important element (one of WWW); or unfairly neglects other side of a contentious story; or intro or its elements are contradicted later in the story; or intro is not backed by a source where necessary	Misses a good or fresh angle; or contains excessive details; is unclear, confusing, wordy, weak or non-specific; or starts with the source or a newsmaker's name where unnecessary; or with date/time; or with a clause or background; or quote intro is used which is not self-sufficient; or intro is about news that did not happen	A 'good' level of quality has a minor deficiency; e.g. is too long; or does not include relevant interest-grabbing details	Intro is simple, clear, concise, summarises news and answers all or most of the relevant 5WH questions; or a creative intro has a minor deficiency	Anecdotal intro is used appropriately; or the intro is otherwise creative, and it suits the content, mood and tone of the story
<b>Focus</b>				
Story has no focus, or it focuses on something irrelevant to news, or the story is a "salad" of	Story unnecessarily includes more than one clear subject; or	Focus is mostly clear	Focus is relevant to news, it is clear what the story is about	Focus is out of the ordinary, fresh, powerful, relevant to most or many readers and is

different subjects	readers have to skip back and forth between points in the story			strongly followed throughout the story
<b>Substantiation</b>				
The intro is not substantiated; or the substantiation block does not contain all main sides in a contentious story	Intro is substantiated insufficiently; or the substantiation block is placed too low in the story	Substantiation block is too large and slows down the dynamics of the story	Intro is substantiated, and this information is placed high in the story	In contentious stories contains all main sides, is short but comprehensive and is placed high enough
<b>Transitions</b>				
Necessary transitions are missing and paragraphs and sentences are not logically linked together	Most transitions are meaningless; or set-up graphs are used; or transition says the same as the following quote says	Most transitions are meaningful and logical	Transitions are logical parts of the text, make the story flow smoothly and convey meaning	Transitions help to understand the following text or quote where necessary
<b>Ending</b>				
New; or contradictory information is introduced; or promotional-sounding instructions are given; or reporter asks questions; or gives statements of the kind “it remains to be seen”	Story ends with an unnecessary conclusion; or irrelevant information; or makes no sense; or it repeats what has already been said	The ‘good’ level has some minor deficiency	The story comes to some logical end; or a short story has no end	Echoes the intro with a short strong quote or statement; or otherwise loops back to the intro or some seminal point closing the circle and creating a sense of completion, image or strong feeling

## Appendix 4. Analysis of criteria of newsworthiness

Table 27. Newsworthiness criteria in literature

<i>Values, criteria</i>	<i>Descriptions, authors</i>	<i>Conclusions</i>
1. Accessibility	Events or issues should be not too complicated and readers should be able to grasp the full meaning of news within the first few words, or they may switch off (Niblock, 2005)	Excluded because it is close in meaning to ‘clarity’, an element of the ‘use of language’ criterion in the ‘Style’ category
2. Actions of the elite	Events involving elite people or organisations are more likely to be covered than those of people perceived as unimportant (Palmer, 2000)	Excluded because it is close in meaning to the ‘prominence’ criterion
3. Bad news	Stories with particularly negative overtones, such as conflict or tragedy (Harcup & O'Neill, 2001)	Excluded because it is close in meaning to the ‘conflict’

		criterion
4. Bizarre	Man bites a dog, not dog bites a man. Odd or peculiar events are more newsworthy than those of a routine nature (DeFleur & Dennis, 2002)	Excluded because it is close in meaning to the 'unexpectedness' criterion
5. Celebrity	Stories concerning people who are already famous (Harcup & O'Neill, 2001)	Excluded because it is close in meaning to the 'prominence' criterion
6. Clarity	Information must be expressed in such a manner that the audience can understand it (Masterton, 1991) What has actually happened must be relatively clear (Palmer, 2000)	Excluded because it is close in meaning to 'clarity', an element of the 'use of language' criterion in the 'Style' category
7. Conflict	Events that reflect clashes or difference of opinion between people or institutions, also includes strife, antagonism and confrontations, internal struggles of people with themselves, drama (Mencher, 1994); people against a system or in conflict with events beyond their control (Baker, 2002); war, crime (Masterton, 1994), any open clashes between persons, groups, animals or things or involving a clash with any of these four against nature (Bridges & Bridges, 1997). The stronger the contrast between the points of view, the greater the conflict (Burns, 2002). Messy divorces, child custody battles, rebellions, personal vendettas (DeFleur & Dennis, 2002)	Included because of its specific content
8. Community interest	News reporters should know and understand the readership and develop a feeling for what readers need and want to know (Steiner, 1988)	Excluded because this element cannot be identified in a news text
9. Composition	A news article competes with other articles, that may be less newsworthy, but are used to balance the coverage throughout the newspaper (Galtung & Ruge, 1965) Coverage of events is partially dictated by the internal structure of newsgathering organisations (Palmer, 2000)	Excluded because it cannot be instrumental in training and assessing of news writing
10. Consequence	The greater an event's effect on people, the more likely it will be reported (Lorenz & Vivian, 1996). Measures the information's effect or impact on an audience, how many people will be affected, how, by how much, and when. Absorbs similar criteria with names such as impact, significance, effect and eventual effect, covers all types of effect including physical, financial, economic,	Excluded because it is close in meaning to the 'impact' criterion in the 'Meaning' category, and also overlaps with 'magnitude' criterion which is part of the 'importance' criterion in the

	political, with the possible exception of emotional (information that has no effect other than emotional falls into the category of human interest) (Masterton, 1991)	'Newsworthiness' category
11. Consonance	Media's readiness to report on certain issues, expected by the public, which may leave some of the other issues out of the coverage (Galtung & Ruge, 1965)	Excluded because it cannot be observed in a news text
12. Continuity	Follow-up on news (Galtung & Ruge, 1965) If an event has already been in the news, there is a good chance it will stay there (Palmer, 2000)	Excluded because it cannot be observed in a news text
13. Currency	Events and situations that have been talked about or were in the air for some time, and for which a news peg appeared to be published (Mencher, 1994) A component of timeliness meaning relevance to current concerns (Green, 2002) The term used to describe how 'hot' an issue is at any one time (environmental issues are very hot, or a politician making racist remarks can give race relations issues currency) (Burns, 2002) Stories pertaining to issues or topics that are in the spotlight of public concern are more newsworthy than those about which people care less (DeFleur & Dennis, 2002) Means that the story is topical and is of ongoing interest to the audience (Rogers)	Excluded because it cannot be observed in a news text
14. Disasters	Natural or accidental. The greater the magnitude, the greater the news value (Granato, 1991)	Excluded because it is close in meaning to 'conflict'
15. Drama	Developing stories, like an unfolding murder trial, or conflict, which have inherent suspense. When conflict involves issues on which society is undecided, including abortion, coverage contributes to make individual conclusions and working out policy for dealing with the problem (Lorenz & Vivian, 1996)	Excluded because it cannot be observed in a news text, and is also close to such criteria as 'human interest' and 'conflict'
16. Entertainment	Stories concerning sex, show business, human interest, animals, an unfolding drama, or offering opportunities for humorous treatment, entertaining photographs or witty headlines	Excluded because it is close in meaning to the 'human interest' criterion
17. Exclusivity	The most prized stories tend to be exclusives, 'scoops'. Such stories attract more readers and give the most prominence for the publication. Even if the story is known, a new twist will	Excluded because it cannot be observed in a news text. However, it could be part of the

	provide its coverage authority over the competitors (Niblock, 2005).	‘unexpectedness’ criterion in the ‘Newsworthiness’ category if the story clearly formulates the uniqueness of the news
18. Follow-up	Stories about subjects already in the news (Harcup & O'Neill, 2001)	Excluded because it cannot be observed in a news text
19. Frequency	A combination of suddenness and fitting with the news organization’s schedule, as opposed to those that come about outside of press time, or long-term trends and time-span needed for the event to unfold itself and acquire meaning (Galtung & Ruge, 1965) The event must be complete within the publication cycle of the news organization reporting it (Palmer, 2000) How close a story happens to the moment of publication (Niblock, 2005)	Excluded because it cannot be observed in a news text
20. Good news	Stories with particularly positive overtones such as rescues and cures (Harcup & O'Neill, 2001)	Excluded because it is close in meaning to the ‘importance’ criterion
21. Human interest	Means that people like to know about other people, even if they are not important people. In some countries this includes items about animals and children, almost anything which stirs human emotion in any way, not necessarily causing serious impact (Masterton, 1994) Emotion, or involvement of tragedy, human interest dilemmas, grief, survivors, victims, children and animals. “A news subject who cries, expresses anger, or is moved to display some other emotion because of the poignancy, frailty or fragility or the human condition is inherently more visually interesting, and therefore has heightened newsworthiness as a source” (McGregor 2002, p. 118)	Included as an individual criterion because it has its own specific content  Stories concerning sex, show business, human interest, animals, an unfolding drama, or offering opportunities for humorous treatment, entertaining photographs or witty headlines
22. Importance	A complex criterion that includes explanation of news, relevance to readers, well-known personalities, answer to the questions ‘so what’ and ‘why should I care’ (Scanlan, 2000) The more people who are affected by an event, the more important the story about it will be (Randall, 2000)	Included as an individual criterion ‘importance’. Its content is the explanation of why news is worth reading at the top of news stories. The deeper assessment of the consequences of news for the variety

		of stakeholders is part of the 'consequences' criterion in the 'Meaning' category
23. Immediacy	A component of timeliness meaning delay before publication (Green, 2002)	Excluded because it is part of the 'timeliness' criterion
24. Impact	Events that are likely to affect many people, equivalent to significance and importance (Mencher, 1994)	Excluded because affecting many people is part of the 'importance' criterion, and 'impact, significance' is an individual criterion in the 'Meaning' category
25. Interest	Excitement and poignancy in news, its unusualness, reporting what people find interesting, what they care about. Reporters themselves, their friends and colleagues should be a barometer of interest (Scanlan, 2000)	Excluded because some of it is part of the 'unexpectedness' criterion and some cannot be identified in news texts
26. Magnitude	Includes any physical or non-physical event in which a large number of persons attended, or which involves large amounts of gains, losses, expenditures or accomplishments. Magnitude is significant from a quantitative point of view. It can also be significant for the smallness of the quantity (Bridges & Bridges, 1997) Stories that are perceived as sufficiently significant either in the numbers of people involved or in potential impact (Harcup & O'Neill, 2001)	Excluded because it is close in meaning to the 'importance' criterion
27. Meaningfulness	Understandable within the cultural framework of the audience, or cultural proximity (Galtung & Ruge, 1965)	Excluded because it is close in meaning to the 'proximity' criterion
28. Negativity	Bad news is more exciting than good news (Galtung & Ruge, 1965) Bad events are more newsworthy than good ones (Palmer, 2000)	Excluded because it is close in meaning to the 'conflict' criterion – conflicts are negative by definition
29. Novelty	Means that people like to know about things which are unusual or different (synonyms: rarity, oddity) (Masterton, 1994) The unusual can be newsworthy sometimes because it is significant and sometimes just because it is interesting, or unique, or odd (Lorenz & Vivian, 1996)	Excluded because it is close in meaning to the 'unexpectedness' criterion



	High news value. Unusualness (man bites dog as opposed to dog bites man, politician changing party as opposed to politician sticking to party) (Burns, 2002)	
30. Newness	Stories must be contemporaneous to achieve prominence. No point reporting yesterday's news in print media today when the readers have been well briefed on it yesterday. Reporters should include latest developments for a weekly publication (Niblock, 2005)	Excluded because it is close in meaning to the 'timeliness' criterion
31. Newspaper agenda	Stories that set or fit the news organisation's own agenda (Harcup & O'Neill, 2001)	Excluded because it cannot be observed in a news text
32. Oddity	An action or event that is rarer than just the unusual, or opposite from what we have learned to expect or predict in our culture and in our time (Bridges & Bridges, 1997)	Excluded because it is close in meaning to the 'unexpectedness' criterion
33. Personification	Events that can be seen in terms of individual people rather than abstractions (Palmer, 2000)	Excluded because it is close in meaning to the 'human interest' criterion
34. Prominence	Stories featuring well-known people, institutions, organisations, physical objects, known places (Bridges & Bridges, 1997; DeFleur & Dennis, 2002; Mencher, 1994)	Included as an individual criterion because it has its own specific content
35. Proximity	News that originates locally is more newsworthy than news from a distance (Bridges & Bridges, 1997; Burns, 2002; DeFleur & Dennis, 2002; Murray Masterton, 1991; Niblock, 2005)	Included as an individual criterion because it has its own specific content
36. Reference to persons	Having an individual portrayed in an article, as opposed to an article with no human angle (Galtung & Ruge, 1965)	Excluded because it is close in meaning to the 'human interest' criterion
37. Reference to elite nations and elite persons	Global powers receive more coverage, as well as both famous and infamous, rich, or powerful (Galtung & Ruge, 1965)	Excluded because it is close in meaning to the 'prominence' criterion
38. Recency	A component of timeliness, meaning recent disclosure (Green, 2002) The more recent the event, the more newsworthy it is (Kershner, 2004)	Excluded because it is close in meaning to the 'timeliness' criterion
39. Relevance	Same as 'proximity' (Ward, 2002) Is linked to the 'interest' and 'importance' elements (Manning, 2001) Stories about issues, groups and nations perceived to be relevant to the audience (Harcup & O'Neill, 2001)	Excluded because of the disagreements in the interpreting of this element and the inclusion of its content in other criteria, mainly in 'proximity'
40. Secrecy	A revelation of important or interesting	Excluded because it

	information that was kept secret from the general public (Masterton, 1994)	belongs to the top end of the performance in the 'importance' criterion
41. Sensation	Not necessarily sensationalism, but an item which is so great on its impact that audience will say "Gee Whiz" or similar whatever the content, it is the shock which is the measure of sensation (Masterton, 1994)	Excluded because it belongs to the top end of the performance in the 'unexpectedness' criterion
42. Sex and violence	"Sex, violence, the unusual and the sensational... are ubiquitous news values, at least in Western Europe and the USA" (Manning, 2001, p. 61)	Excluded because these are not criteria but content
43. Surprise	Stories that have an element of surprise and/or contrast (Harcup & O'Neill, 2001)	Excluded because it is close in meaning to the 'unexpectedness' criterion
44. Timeliness	Timeliness is a time lag between news occurrence and the time of its publication (Brooker-Gross, 1981), timely news is events that are immediate, recent (Burns, 2002; Folkerts, Lacy, & Larabee, 2008; Mencher, 1994; Scanlan, 2000a; Tully, 2008b).	Included because of its specific content
45. The power elite	Stories concerning powerful individuals, organisations or institutions (Harcup & O'Neill, 2001)	Excluded because it is close in meaning to the 'prominence' criterion
46. Threshold	The bigger the event, the more newsworthy it is (Galtung & Ruge, 1965) The event must pass a certain size threshold to qualify for sufficient importance to be newsworthy (Palmer, 2000)	Excluded because it is close in meaning to the 'importance' criterion
47. Topicality	Relevance to current concerns (Green, 2002).	Excluded because as well as the 'currency' criterion to which it is close in meaning, it cannot be directly observed in news texts
48. Unambiguity	No need for complex interpretations, and simple background (Galtung & Ruge, 1965)	This criterion has been developed to judge the newsworthiness of foreign news and it does not necessarily belong to the group of criterion to judge domestic news which may need complex interpretations and sophisticated

		background to make sense for the local audience, therefore this criterion was excluded from the NTA
49. Unexpectedness	Unexpectedness as opposed to everyday occurrence (“man bites dog”) (Galtung & Ruge, 1965), Within the framework of meaningfulness identified in cultural proximity and consonance, the event must be unexpected or rare (Palmer, 2000)	Included as an individual criterion because it has its own specific content
50. Unusualness	Events that deviate sharply from the expected and the experiences of everyday life (Mencher, 1994)	Excluded because it is close in meaning to the ‘unexpectedness’ criterion
51. Unpredictability	Unpredictable events, such as natural or man-made disasters, stories that surprise, that cause readers say ‘wow!’ or ‘fancy that!’ are likely to make good copy (Niblock, 2005)	Excluded because it is close in meaning to the ‘unexpectedness’ criterion
52. Weirdness (unusual or strange)	Involving something unusual or strange (Blake, n.d.)	Excluded because it is close in meaning to the ‘unexpectedness’ criterion

## Appendix 5. Tweets by Schlesinger

Soros – structural weakness in construction of euro #davos

4:16 AM Jan 28th from txt

Soros – for gbp: below 1.4 difficult to see risk/reward to take position on pound #davos

4:00 AM Jan 28th from txt

Soros – "I was able to protect my capital" and get "satisfactory" rate of return #davos

3:58 AM Jan 28th from txt

Soros – financial industry has to shrink by half! #davos

3:56 AM Jan 28th from txt

Soros – new financial system needs to emerge before we can talk about length of recession #davos

3:55 AM Jan 28th from txt

Soros – use SDRs to create money internationally on large scale circa 1 trln drls worth #davos

3:53 AM Jan 28th from txt

Soros – says he'd be happy to invest in "good" bank if good/bad split done right #davos

3:47 AM Jan 28th from txt

Soros – injection of approx 1.5 trillion dlrs still needed for banks, more than the capitalisation of sector! #davos

3:45 AM Jan 28th from txt

Soros – must keep housing prices from overshooting on downside #davos

3:42 AM Jan 28th from txt

Soros – bush administration always behind the curve; acted slowly #davos

3:41 AM Jan 28th from txt

Soros – what we need to do is to create money to recapitalise banking system; write off bad debt in orderly fashion #davos

3:40 AM Jan 28th from txt

Soros – the size of the problem facing us today is larger than in the 30s #davos

3:38 AM Jan 28th from txt

Soros – efficient market hypothesis has been disproved #davos

3:31 AM Jan 28th from txt

## Appendix 6. Analysis of elements of style in journalism news writing

**Table 28. Elements of style in news writing**

<i>Name of the book, reference</i>	<i>Number and names of chapters/sections/content where it is not obvious</i>	<i>Suggested names of the criteria for the NTA, notes and explanations where relevant</i>
<i>Newsman's English</i> by (Evans, 1972)	Chapter 2 "Good English" Chapter 3 "Words" Chapter 4 "Watch the language"	Use of language Grammar
<i>Writing for the press</i> (Aitchison, 1988)	Chapter 5 "Standard and non-standard English" Chapter 6 "Prose style" Chapter 8 "Quote... Unquote—direct speech" Chapter 9 "Reported Speech" Chapter 10 "Multi-task exercises"	Use of language, Use of quotes
<i>News Reporting and Writing</i> (Brooks, et al., 1988)	Chapter 4 "The importance of good writing" (precision, clarity, pacing, transitions, sensory appeal, using analogies) Chapter 6 "Quotes and attribution" Appendix "Wire service style" (capitalisation, abbreviations and acronyms, punctuation and hyphenation, numerals)	Use of language Use of quotes Colour Senses Attributions have been placed in the 'Factual quality and credibility' category as they belong more in contributing to the credibility of news
<i>News Writing and Reporting for Today's Media</i> (Itule & Anderson, 1991)	Chapter 4 "Qualities of good writing" (includes the rules of clear, simple, short and conversational writing that helps create images) Chapter 8 "Quotations and attribution"	Use of language Use of quotes Images
<i>Beyond the inverted pyramid</i> (Kennedy, Moen, Ranly, & Missouri Group., 1993)	Chapter 7 "The essence of good writing" (be correct, consistent, concise, clear and coherent) Chapter 8 "Creative writing techniques" (use sensory appeal, descriptions, pacing and emphasis, how to handle quotes and attribution) Appendix B "The joy of grammar" Appendix C "The lessons of general semantics" (linguistic basis for the	Use of language Use of quotes Grammar Descriptions Senses

	principles of good writing)	
<i>Reporting and Writing</i> (Mencher, 1994)	Chapter 7 “The Writer’s Art” (teaches how to express news through anecdotes, quotations and incidents; how to use quotations and human interest details; how to write precisely, clearly and convincingly; and how to use good grammar)  “Stylebook” (provides guidelines to provide uniform presentation of journalistic texts)  Appendix “Grammar”	Use of language Use of quotes Grammar Colour Descriptions Details Senses Images
<i>News Reporting and Writing</i> (Lorenz & Vivian, 1996)	Chapter 6 “Incorporating other people’s words”  Chapter 7 “Making your writing likeable”  Chapter 8 “Building color into news stories”  Chapter 9 “Using the language effectively”	Use of language Use of quotes Colour Descriptions Senses Images
<i>Newspapers Handbook</i> (Keeble, 1994)	Chapter 5 “Learning the language of news” (outlined the need to use a simple, brief, and clear language)	Use of language Grammar
<i>Writing Right for Today’s Mass Media</i> (Adams, 1998)	Chapter 11 “Quotations”  Chapter 24-30 “Writing concisely, with precision, powerfully, smoothly, clearly, with color & imagery, conversationally”  Chapter 34 “Writing correctly” (grammar and punctuation)  Appendix C “Print media style” (includes grammar, punctuation, spelling)	Use of language Use of quotes Grammar, punctuation Colour Descriptions Details Senses Images
<i>The Universal Journalist</i> (Randall, 2000)	Chapter 14 “Writing for newspapers” (clarity, fresh language, precision)  Chapter 17 “Handling quotes”	Use of language Use of quotes
<i>Contemporary Editing</i> (Friend, et al., 2000)	Chapter 4 “Focus on grammar: The mechanics of language”  Chapter 5 “Focus on good writing: Strong and graceful prose” (write simple, brief, eliminate redundancy, write with precision, active verbs, avoid cliches, how to use metaphors, quotations and attributions, pacing)  Chapter 8 “Making a long story	Use of language Use of quotes Colour

	short” Editing for brevity and clarity” Appendix A: Frequently misused words	
<i>Strategic Copy Editing (Russial, 2004)</i>	Chapter 2 “Mechanics. The nuts and bolts (grammar and usage) Chapter 4 “Precision and language” (loaded words, jargon, bias and sensitivity, problems with numbers, percentages, clarity, clutter, active voice)	Use of language Grammar
<i>Making Important News Interesting (Parks, 2006).</i>	Chapter 7 “Refuse to be boring” (includes such topics as ‘tone and drama’ and ‘humour and surprise)	Use of language Use of quotes Humour
<i>A Writer’s Coach (Hart, 2006)</i>	Chapter 4 “Force” (active voice, use of verbs) Chapter 5 “Brevity” Chapter 6 “Clarity” Chapter 7 “Rhythm” Chapter 8 “Humanity” (images, quotes, attributions) Chapter 9 “Color” (abstract and specific, details, expressing emotions, using metaphors) Chapter 10 “Voice” (unique angles of approach to subjects, the individual personality that emerges in writing regardless of what the words say, plain English, journalese, cliches) Chapter 11 “Mechanics” (grammar)	Use of language Use of quotes Images Colour Journalist’s voice Grammar
<i>Intro (Tully, 2008d)</i>	Chapter 4 “The News Story” in the sections “Media language” and “Quoting and attribution” (Tucker, 2008). Chapter 6 “Thinking about good writing” (in the ‘Clarity’ part of journalistic writing the author includes: No euphemisms, no extra words, the right words) (Schuler, 2008)	Use of language Use of quotes

## Appendix 7. Only Human Wreckage is left in Village of Karubamba<sup>128</sup>

By: Mark Fritz

May 13, 1994

KARUBAMBA, Rwanda (AP) -- Nobody lives here any more.

Not the expectant mothers huddled outside the maternity clinic, not the families squeezed into the church, not the man who lies rotting in a schoolroom beneath a chalkboard map of Africa.

Everybody here is dead. Karubamba is a vision from hell, a flesh-and-bone junkyard of human wreckage, an obscene slaughterhouse that has fallen silent save for the roaring buzz of flies the size of honeybees.

With silent shrieks of agony locked on decaying faces, hundreds of bodies line the streets and fill the tidy brick buildings of this village, most of them in the sprawling Roman Catholic complex of classrooms and clinics at Karubamba's stilled heart.

*Karubamba is just one breathtakingly awful example of the mayhem that has made beautiful little Rwanda the world's most ghastly killing ground.*<sup>129</sup>

*Karubamba, 30 miles northeast of Kigali, the capital, died April 11, six days after Rwandan President Juvenal Habyarimana, a member of the Hutu tribe, was killed in a plane crash whose cause is still undetermined.*

*The paranoia and suspicion surrounding the crash blew the lid off decades of complex ethnic, social and political hatreds. It ignited a murderous spree by extremists from the majority Hutus against rival Tutsis and those Hutus who had opposed the government.*

*This awesome wave of remorseless mayhem has claimed 100,000 to 200,000 lives, say U.N. and other relief groups. Many were cut down while cowering in places traditionally thought safe havens: churches, schools, relief agencies.*

One stroll past the bleached skulls, ripped limbs and sunbaked sinews on the blood-streaked streets of Karubamba gives weight to those estimates.

Almost every peek through a broken window or splintered door reveals incomprehensible horror. A schoolboy killed amid tumbling desks and benches. A couple splattered against a wall beneath a portrait of a serene, haloed Jesus Christ.

Peer into the woods every few hundred feet along the red-clay road to Karubamba and see piles of bodies heaped in decaying clumps.

News from Rwanda has been dominated by accounts of the carnage in Kigali or of millions of refugees living in mud and filth in vast encampments just outside the border. But what happened in Karubamba has happened - and is still happening - in villages across this fertile green nation of velvety, terraced hills.

---

<sup>128</sup> The original of this news report is posted at <http://www.pulitzer.org/archives/5701>

<sup>129</sup> Italics singling out the nut graf added by this author. The nut graf was identified by (2000, p. 170)



Survivors from Karubamba say when early word came of the Hutu rampage, people from surrounding towns fled to the seemingly safe haven of the Rukara Parish complex here.

On the night of April 11, the killers swarmed among the neat rows of buildings and began systematically executing the predominantly Tutsi population with machetes, spears, clubs and guns.

"They said, 'You are Tutsi, therefore we have to kill you,'" said Agnes Kantengwa, 34, who was among dozens holed up inside the yellow-brick church.

"We thought we were safe in church. We thought it was a holy place."

It wasn't.

Her husband and four children were butchered amid the overturned pews. Bodies stretched to the ornately carved hardwood altar beneath a large crucifix.

Somewhere amid the stinking human rubble is the Rev. Faustin Kagimbura, "who tried to protect us," Kantengwa said.

Down the road, outside the maternity clinic next to the hospital, about 25 bodies lie beneath a cluster of shade trees; most appear to be women, but it is difficult now to be sure.

"They were women waiting to have babies," Kantengwa said. "The killers made them go outside and kneel down, then cut them in the head with machetes and spears. They said, 'You are Tutsi.'"

Mrs. Kantengwa, her 6-year-old son and 6-month-old daughter survived with a mosaic of machete wounds. They share one hospital bed in nearby Gahini, a larger town that breathes bustling life as easily as Karubamba exudes the suffocating stench of month-old death.

At the primary school midway between the maternity clinic and the church, a man lies prone beneath a meticulously drawn blackboard sketch of Africa, the capitals of each nation listed alongside.

Serena Mukagasana, 16, said the man was teacher Matthias Kanamugire.

The girl also was in the church when the slaughter began. By the time it was over, she was an orphan.

"All my family was killed," she said. She fled outside during the slaughter and watched from the bushes.

"They just killed and killed," she said.

The Tutsi-dominated Rwandan Patriotic Front that has been battling the government since 1991 has made huge gains in the countryside since the rampage began.

Their secured areas are relatively stable and well-policed, though scores of villages remain empty and thousands of people line the roads looking for safe places to stop. More than 1.3 million people in this nation of 8 million are displaced.

The rebels took Gahini and set up a base just days after the massacre at Karubamba. It is one of the staging areas for what is believed to be an imminent rebel assault on Kigali, where

guerrillas are battling government troops backed by Hutu militias.

Capt. Diogene Mugenge, the rebel commander in Gahini, said an estimated 1,500 to 2,000 people died in the carnage at Karubamba. The only sign of human life in the area is a lone sentry posted roughly where the fresh air begins.

When asked about the massacre, and the fact that mutilated, battered bodies remain frozen in the moment of agonizing death just a few miles from his base, Mugenge shrugs.

"It's happening everywhere," he said.

## Appendix 8. An excerpt from the NTA ('impact' criterion)

Figure 20. The 'impact' criterion of the NTA

6. Impact, consequences (edit)				
6.1 No harm, danger or other kinds of life- or well-being threatening impact that news may have on people is mentioned when necessary(611); or the story promotes or encourages criminal acts, self-destructive or otherwise bad behaviour (612); or story has other serious flaws in representation of the impact and consequences of news (613)	6.2 Impact of news on main stakeholder or stakeholders is not shown where necessary (621), while it is especially important for people (622); communities or society (623); budgets (624); organizations (625); businesses (626); entrepreneurs (627); industries (628); environment (629) or others (6210), or it is wrong (6211); or given where unnecessary or obvious (6212); or story has other shortcomings in representation of the impact and consequences of news (6213)	6.3 Descriptions in the 'good' level has minor deficiencies (631); including that coverage of impact is limited to only main stakeholder (632); and it is unclear what news means to others directly involved or affected (633); including people (634); communities (635); or society (636); budgets (637); organizations (638); businesses (639); entrepreneurs (6310); industries (6311); environment (6312); or others (6312), or impact is explained at length before the WWWWWH are covered (6313); or story has other minor weaknesses in representation of the impact and consequences of news (6314)	6.4 Story explains what news means to its direct stakeholders (641), including people (642); society (643); communities (644); budgets (645); organisations (646); businesses (647); entrepreneurs (648); industries (649); minorities (6410); environment (6411) other life forms (6412); or formations (6413); or on other relevant matters (6414); and issues (6415); or representation of the story's impact is 'good' otherwise (6416)	6.5 Story clearly outlines not only its current impact as suggested in the 'good' level, but also relevant potential problems for people and main stakeholders (651); hazards (652); harm (653); negative chain effects (654); or any other serious consequences news may cause (655); or representation of impact of the story is 'outstanding' otherwise (656)

Source: Website of the online training tool (<http://nta.alterwebs.com/>). Access for authorised users only.

## **Appendix 9. The Associated Press story**

Gunmen make getaway on city bus

The Associated Press

10 May 1997

NEW YORK - Heavily armed gunmen ambushed a payroll delivery and got away with \$50,000 after spraying a quiet street with bullets, critically wounding a moonlighting off-duty detective and a retired police officer.

The robbers, believed to have been armed with assault rifles, pumped bullets into the men Friday even as they lay wounded on the ground.

Both guards were expected to survive.

The gunmen escaped, first by jumping into a getaway van a few blocks away from the scene - a printing company in the city's Queens borough. The van sped the wrong way down a one-way street, hitting parked cars along the way.

Then the three or four gunmen abandoned the van and hopped aboard a city bus, riding it to another neighborhood. The driver told detectives the only unusual thing was that they paid the \$1.50 fares in cash, not tokens.

The mid-morning holdup happened outside the printing company, where the lawmen were moonlighting as security guards. They had just delivered the payroll in checks and cash when the bullets fired from several directions.

"It's a miracle that both of them have a real chance of survival, given the brutality and viciousness of this attack," Mayor Rudolph Giuliani said.

As many as 48 shots were fired at the guards, he said.

"Both officers were shot many, many, many times," said Dr. James Turner.

The retired officer, Joseph Bellone, 45, was able to return eight or nine shots at his assailants, Police Commissioner Howard Safir said. One of his bullets may have blown out a tire on the van, police said.

The other injured man, Detective Arthur Pettus, 38, had permission to moonlight as a security guard, Safir said.

Both guards were in stable condition after surgery at New York Hospital Medical Center of Queens.

## Appendix 10. Data from the interviews of the graduates of the online training

**Table 29. Reporters' opinions about repetitive mistakes**

<i>Question: During the training you kept repeating the same mistakes, sometimes 4 to 6 times. Why was it so hard to fix the specific problems?</i>	<i>Names of reporters</i>
When writing a story I always wanted to keep in mind all your suggestions, but it does not always happen. I can make it work in one place of the text, but fail in another. When I saw the repetition of the same mistake I thought 'S*', again I missed it'. Honestly. I looked in the learning materials again, and made additional sets of exercises if there were any. But still, the same mistakes kept cropping up. I can't recall which exactly.	Helen
These were serious mistakes, their correction was difficult, for instance correct structuring of news and writing intro. I read learning materials again and tried to fix the problem.	Norma
I wasn't too attentive, and did not immediately put down the specific mistakes, or did not stick them as notes near my computer. The hardest were mostly mechanics, I kept forgetting to show the competency of a source, or make sure I mentioned how I obtained information, or used a wrong spelling of a name, or used officialese. When I realised I had repeated a mistake, I thought 'God! Again!' and made a note to myself not to repeat it.	Dina
It was mainly small details <sup>130</sup> . It is impossible to remember all the details of learning materials. Even if one learns general rules and understands the general sense of everything, small details always got out of hand. For me these were non-specific words and elements of 'accuracy'. To avoid the problem, I read the learning material again, read hyperlinks in it, recorded the problem in a notebook, but was still frustrated.	Julia
It happened in the topics which deal with unique matters, for example you need to write the assessment of the particular political situation as a short contextual block. I read the learning materials again, sometimes did exercises again. I think all complex materials need several sets of exercises. My mistakes which kept repeating were linked to conflicts and contexts.	Vicky
It is a bit difficult to recognise the same elements in different kinds of stories. I had problems with the 'substantiation' block and with contexts, but every time I read the textbook, and examples, and it gradually became clearer. After you read the same thing 10 times, you are bound to understand, and you see that it is actually not so complicated.	Edgar
I made mistakes because I did not understand that it was a mistake, but I tried not to repeat them.	Ellie

<sup>130</sup> Julia's assessment portfolio (Appendix 13) presents all the mistakes she made in her stories, including 'inappropriate' mistakes in 'accuracy', 'objectivity', 'newsworthiness' that kept cropping up until the end of the training.

**Table 30. What Julia should have done with the marked copy to process the mistakes**

<i>First group: Conceptual mistakes</i>	<i>Times repeated during the training<sup>131</sup></i>
(324a1) Journalist editorialises	6
(331h1a) Explanations are missing to clarify details in the text	6
(412) The statement in the intro, based on a comment, is not proven in the text	6
(1324a1) Logical links are absent, or technical transitions are used	6
(1113c1) Story contains faulty logic	5
(223) News is not substantiated	3
(1215c1) Intro is not straightforward	1
(226) News does not mention the circumstances in which information was obtained	1
<i>Second group: mistakes in the mechanics of news writing</i>	
(1323g1) Key context is too long and slows down the narrative	7
(211a1) Information is not attributed to a source	4
(221b1) Story contains mistakes in names or titles	4
(911b1) Key descriptions of a source are missing that may have changed the perception of the news	
(1323b1) Unnecessary beginning of a paragraph with an attribution	4
(1323f1) Key context contains redundant information	3
(1323b1a) Paragraph or sentence does not begin with the most important issue	2
(1021b1) The quote is out of the focus of news	1
<i>Third group: mistakes in the use of language</i>	
(1123) Non-specific words are used	11
(1113d1) Writing is unclear	7
(1115) Serious grammar or stylistic mistakes or other serious problems of the language	5
(1121a1) Unnecessary words are used	4
(1121a1a) Unnecessary or value-laden adjectives and adverbs are used	4
(224b1) Comments are unclear	3
(1127c1c) Wrong style of attribution is used — after an unfinished thought	1

<sup>131</sup> The trainees had access to these statistics through their personal profiles

**Table 31. Relevance of western news writing values for Azerbaijan**

<i>Question: Do you think these criteria are alien for journalism in Azerbaijan? Please explain your answer</i>	
All the western standards we studied are applicable here	Helen, Julia
I think it is objectivity that is alien. It is absent in Azerbaijan's journalism. But other elements are equally important	Vicky
All the elements are needed, but it is not always possible to use them all because my beat [business] is rather restrictive and it is very difficult to get comprehensive information. I agree that we need to aspire to be better, clearer, more transparent, but it is not always possible	Edgar
They are alien in the sense that they are not used here, but they are all needed	Ellie
Yes, they are alien. People here don't need fair and accurate news. They enjoy one-sided news about how bad are Armenians <sup>132</sup> , and then actively discuss it on forums never noticing that the stories are one-sided. People here do not appreciate in-depth stories	Dina

**Table 32. Assessment of examples in the instructional files in the SET**

<i>Question: Assess the quality of the instructional materials that were attached to the marked copies by codes, explain your assessment and give suggestions of how to improve them</i>	<i>Names of reporters</i>
5, examples in some of the materials are just amazing. Gathering them from different media must have cost a lot of time. I remember that when I was reading examples from the file on officialese I was killing myself laughing, I even read it to my mother and we had a good long laugh together. Examples are very vivid and memorable. One other excellent example that I remember was of contexts in a story about a female suicide bomber, her name was, I think, Rima Riyashi <sup>133</sup> . Nothing needs to be changed, just add new examples, equally vivid	Helen
5, examples were very helpful, and the more examples had learning materials, the easier it was to sort out own mistake	Norma
5, examples are helpful, often it is easier to understand the core and the subtleties of the learning material from examples. Every point in examples was explained, and I understood what to pay attention at in each case	Julia
5, they are very convenient, allow to understand own mistakes on the spot	Vicky
5, examples are excellent, they helped a lot	Ellie
4, examples helped, but reading marked copies of my colleagues helped me even more	Dina
3, examples are the most interesting in the learning materials, I think they	Edgar

<sup>132</sup> Azerbaijan is involved in a 16-year old conflict with neighbouring Armenia for Nagorny Karabakh. This region, about 16 percent of Azeri territory, has been occupied by Armenia for over 16 years and over a million Azeris have been thrown out of their homes. Negotiations, in which the US, French and Russian diplomats are mediating between the countries, remain at time of writing fruitless

<sup>133</sup> Rim Salih al-Riyashi was the first Palestinian female suicide bomber, mother of two

should be the main focus in the materials, there should be more of them. When you see how, for instance, structuring works in different kinds of stories, you start to understand the content of different blocks more clearly	
--	--

**Table 33. Assessment of exercises in the instructional files in the SET**

<i>Question: Assess the quality of the exercises in the instructional materials, explain your assessment and give suggestions of how to improve them</i>	<i>Names of reporters</i>
5, I liked them. They make you think actively. Very interesting. Without the exercises I would not be able to digest new topics properly. Also, I like that chunks of our own texts were used for exercises. A couple of times I found my own bits of texts, and it is good as it helps to understand own mistakes	Helen
5, I always prefer practice to theory	Dina
5, nothing should be changed. Exercises are clear, explicit, without extra information, and to the point. When I started to do exercises, I started to understand what is required from me, especially when I compared my answers with the correct answer	Julia
5, very useful	Ellie
4, because some examples were used in which one needs some specific knowledge, for instance, on economics. I think it is better to use examples that can be understood by everyone	Vicky
3	Edgar
Void	Norma

**Table 34. Assessment of hyperlinks in the instructional materials in the SET**

<i>Question: Assess the quality of the hyperlinks in the instructional materials, explain your assessment and give suggestions of how to improve them</i>	<i>Names of reporters</i>
5	Norma
5, they are very convenient, and allow to deeper learn topics	Vicky
4, a big number of hyperlinks sometimes confuses. But overall, I got used to them	Helen
4, they helped to find new exercises	Dina
3, they complicate learning, and take a lot of time. Apart from this, I sometimes forgot where I started	Julia
3, just looking at the hyperlinks, and then hyperlinks within the hyperlinked materials, I lost the desire to read anything. The materials are too dense and thus too complicated	Edgar
3, they confuse. When I am trying to fix my chunk of text with the specific mistake, I have to click on codes and read other materials. So I am not sorting out my problem but read a lot of learning materials. I don't know what to do about it, but they confuse.	Ellie



**Table 35. Assessment of the quality of instructional materials in the SET**

<i>Question: Assess the quality of the instructional materials that were attached to the marked copies by codes, explain your assessment and give suggestions on how to improve them</i>	<i>Names of reporters</i>
5, because I did not need to look for anything myself. You just open and read, and there are exercises there, too. It is a good system, nothing needs to be changed	Helen
5, but I would recommend to delete hyperlinks from the texts of learning materials, it is better if all these materials are placed at the bottom of the file	Ellie
5, they were practically useful	Julia
5	Vicky
4, some materials looked not very clear until I got to do exercises	Dina
4	Norma
3, because of too many hyperlinks and explanations	Edgar

**Table 36. Assessment of the usefulness of the task in which trainees rewrote a piece of text in the stories in which they made mistakes**

<i>Question: How useful was the task of rewriting chunks of your own text which contained a mistake? Explain your assessment and give suggestions on how to improve them</i>	<i>Names of reporters</i>
5, this is important so that you don't repeat the same mistake	Dina
5, it helps a lot, because you clearly see your mistakes, and rewrite own text in line with what you have just learned	Julia
4, because I had problems with this part of the learning task for a long time. I was lazy to come back to what I have already written before, and to rewrite it. But later, I got used to it. Actually it is very useful when you rewrite your own text and not someone else's. For some reason, it is more difficult. When it is your own text, you think 'I have already written it as well as I could'. But after some thinking, a better option can be always found.	Helen
4, I think that is not applicable for some type of texts, for example for news analysis, because you have to rewrite the whole text. I think this part should be individualised	Vicky
3, I am not interested in rewriting my own text	Ellie
I think you don't need to rewrite your old stories, but aim not to make the same mistakes in new stories	Edgar
Void	Norma

**Table 37. Assessment of the quality of quizzes**

<i>Question: Assess the quality of quizzes. If you did not do them, put 0. Explain your assessment and give suggestions on how to improve them</i>	<i>Names of reporters</i>
5, solving quizzes was interesting. I always like to do tests. Nothing needs to change. It is convenient, like everything on the site. You chose the answer, and immediately see the correct answer	Helen
5, they are useful in that the answers are very similar and one needs to find a smaaaaaaaallish <sup>134</sup> subtlety to answer correctly. It shows how the journalist digested the learning material. I was more interested in quizzes than in doing exercises because finding the correct answer shows the ability of a journalist to transfer new knowledge into practice	Julia
4, they are just interesting	Edgar
3, there are not enough of them	Ellie
3, they are too easy	Vicky
2, because I would like to have more of them. I think that perhaps a test of 10 questions would have been even better. Just one question after reading a learning material seems insufficient	Dina
0	Norma

**Table 38. The trainees' opinions about assessing stories**

<i>Question: Please rate the importance of assessment during the training, explain your assessment and give suggestions on how to improve this part of the training</i>	<i>Names of reporters</i>
5, we don't learn to get high marks, but, as they said at school, marks are showing you the level you are on, and therefore I think they are useful. Also was very convenient that one can see what the marks consisted of	Helen
5, I agree it is important	Vicky
4, it was very cruel to be so harshly fined for the most typical mistakes we have been doing — 'accuracy' and 'objectivity'. You work so hard to get information, and then for the absence of 'said in a telephone interview' are fined by minus 33 points	Dina
4, I am not sure it is objective enough if you don't take into account the time we spend on writing stories	Ellie
1, it was the most hated element of the training. Like the sword of Damocles. Did not allow me to feel comfortable at the training	Edgar
Cannot assess it	Julia
Void	Norma

---

<sup>134</sup> Emphasis in original

**Table 39. Opinions about the opportunity to follow own progress**

<i>Question: Rate the importance of assessment during the training, explain your assessment and give suggestions on how to improve this part of the training</i>	<i>Names of reporters</i>
5, it is a very positive moment. I was glad to see that my grades are getting better with every story. In the middle of the training I had a failure to minus 60, and I was upset but then I got above zero and my grades went steadily up. It is very important to see whether you are improving, going down or staying the same	Helen
5, this is a very important part, you see a trend in your achievements	Dina
Perhaps it would be better to keep the grades only on the profile of each participant?	Julia
5, it is convenient and very important	Vicky
5, because assessments existed and they were the only way we could have followed the trends. Allowed me to see how I was doing	Edgar
5, you can visualise how you progress or regress	Ellie
Void	Norma

**Table 40. Assessment of the quality of marking stories with the help of SET**

<i>Question: Please assess the quality of the marking of your stories, explain your assessment and give suggestions of how to improve this element of the training</i>	<i>Names of reporters</i>
5, because constructive criticism from a competent person is always important. It was interesting to read the trainer's notes and to see suggested versions of text. It helps when you see a better version. I don't think that anything should be changed	Helen
5, everything was clear from the trainer's notes	Norma
5, nothing should be changed, the marked copies were clear and understandable	Dina
5, it would have been impossible to train without the marked copies	Julia
5, the reviews were in my opinion the most important element of the training. I liked everything in them	Vicky
5, they were of course very useful, but I did not always understand what the trainer wanted from me. That is the complexity of such [online] training, that not everything that is written is understandable	Edgar
5	Ellie

**Table 41. Assessment of the expediency of reading other journalists' marked stories**

<i>Question: Did you read marked stories of your colleagues? Was it useful? If you did not read, put 0.</i>	<i>Names of reporters</i>
5, it helped very much, sometimes even more than reading my own marked stories	Dina
5, it is very convenient, because sometimes we don't make mistakes because we haven't encountered some specific situations. And reading someone else's marked stories you can learn of other people's mistakes, without having to make your own. It's a shame time was scarce	Vicky
5, it was also very interesting, because one should learn from other people's mistakes, and not only one's own	Edgar
4, this was one more kind of practice	Ellie
4, I read sometimes, and it helped to see problems that I hadn't noticed before	Norma
I read only some, can't comment	Julia
I read a few stories. I am not sure it was useful, it was just curious to see how different your marking of their stories from marking mine was	Helen

**Table 42. The completeness of the use of the main elements in the SET**

<i>Question: Have you always read all the learning materials and done all the exercises?</i>	<i>Names of reporters</i>
No, because of the lack of time. I read most of the learning materials, but did not do all the exercises. I chose the most interesting subjects, because I could not do them all (Helen), or because some urgent assignment was given and I forgot about them (Norma)	Helen, Norma
I did not read all the learning materials, but concentrated more on doing exercises. Sometimes I even specially searched for exercises on the website	Dina
I read all the materials, including all which were hyperlinked to the main file, and did all the exercises	Julia
I did not read all the materials hyperlinked to the main learning file because of the lack of time, and I did not do all the exercises in the hyperlinked files. I read the names of the hyperlinked files, and if I have already read them, I did not process them again.	Vicky
Not always. Sometimes I did not read learning materials in the SET because I often re-read the paper-based textbook. I sometimes missed doing exercises because of the lack of time	Edgar
Always	Ellie

**Table 43. Assessment of usefulness of a training diary**

<i>Question: Did you keep the diary of the training, if yes, how useful was it? If you did not, put 0</i>	<i>Names of reporters</i>
5, because after you write there something that you MUST NOT DO, you really stop doing it very soon	Dina
5, it is useful and needs to be checked, and checking should be done by editor	Vicky
4, it helped to recall what I was thinking in the beginning of the training and compare with the conclusions I made later	Helen
4, sometimes when I forgot something I went back to read it in the diary	Norma
3, it was not very useful to me, if I needed to find anything I could find it on the training website	Ellie
1, I started to write in it, but then I did not have time on it, I know my mistakes without having to write them in the diary	Edgar
0 <sup>a</sup>	Julia

*Note*

<sup>a</sup> See conversation with Julia regarding keeping diary in Appendix 14.

**Table 44. Assessment of the contest for the best story**

<i>Question: What do you think about the contest for the best story of the Agency at the end of the training?</i>	<i>Names of reporters</i>
It was flattering, but I can't comment because of the conflict of interest <sup>a</sup>	Helen
5, everything was objective	Norma
5, I am not a fan of contests, but why not, if everything is assessed objectively	Dina
5, because you can see the achievements during the training, see pluses and minuses, compare yourself with the others by juxtaposing your story against colleagues' stories, and better see own problems	Julia
4, I think the time spent on writing a story should be considered, too. I write mine in two hours, and some others take three days, of course their stories are better, but my story ideas can't wait	Ellie
3, I think that the contest should have different criteria of assessment, include the impact of the story	Vicky
1, I did not like it. You can't put in one category news and news analysis. Those who write analyses have more time. I cannot spend one or more days on writing one story. If I could, my achievements would have been higher	Edgar

*Note*

<sup>a</sup> Helen was the winner of the contest

**Table 45. Assessment of the quality of communication with the instructor**

<i>Question: Please assess the quality of your communication with the instructor. What was the best format of this communication for you?</i>	<i>Names of reporters</i>
5, very important. I often had plenty of questions and I needed an opportunity to communicate with the trainer. ICQ was convenient, but it was time consuming because when communication is available, one always wants to ask something. I think the most convenient was communication through the website, because I got replies quickly and the timeliness of communication is not suffering. But it does not lure you into just talking about everything	Helen
5, I think ICQ is the best for communication, because other ways may mean that you get the answers later that you need them. The opportunity to talk to the trainer is a must in online training, because otherwise I can just sit at home and read a journalism textbook	Dina
5, the most convenient was ICQ. One reason is that none of us know you personally, and more or less personal contact is possible only in online communication. You can't write as much otherwise. I did not get engaged by the training before I started to communicate by ICQ. Also, while talking by ICQ, I had a lot of new ideas. Such training is impossible without the ICQ	Vicky
5, because it is live communication. What you can explain in such communication cannot be explained in any other written form. ICQ was of course the most effective and necessary, because it allows everything to be speeded up	Edgar
5, it was of course useful, but took time. I would have allocated special time for such communication, for instance 1 hour in the morning and 1 hour in the afternoon. For me the best format was ICQ — it is quick because it is online	Ellie
I did not have problems to communicate either way, but ICQ was the easiest	Julia
I communicated only through the training website, but ICQ is also good because it is faster and easier	Norma

**Table 46. Time spent on reading marked stories**

<i>Question: How much time did you spend on reading marked stories?</i>	<i>Names of reporters</i>
At work, I could only quickly read it and focus on the most interesting points, perhaps spending about 10 minutes. Then, I more attentively read them at home and mulled over the corrections. I didn't time it, perhaps 20 or 30 minutes	Helen
From 30 minutes to an hour	Norma
I read them many times spending about 15 minutes each time. I read them	Dina

each time I did exercises to fix my mistakes	
30 minutes to just understand all the mistakes	Julia, Edgar
To read one marked copy in the middle of the training I spent about 40 minutes, but the time depended on how much time I had to spend and how many mistakes I had made	Vicky
About 20 minutes in one go, but I kept coming back and read them 4-6 times	Ellie

**Table 47. Time spent on reading one learning material**

<i>Question: How much time did you spend on reading one learning material in the SET?</i>	<i>Names of reporters</i>
I never timed, but perhaps about 20 minutes depending on the material. There were easy issues to understand, but there were some which needed to be read again. I like to read for deep understanding	Helen
About 20 minutes on average	Ellie
From 20 to 30 minutes	Norma, Vicky
From 30 to 60 minutes	Julia
It depended. Some short materials may have taken 5 minutes, longer up to 15 minutes	Dina
Depending on the complexity of the material. I read some several times. It was examples in the material that made them digestible. Without the examples it would have been much more difficult	Edgar

**Table 48. Time spent on doing one exercise**

<i>Question: How much time did you spend on doing one exercise in the SET?</i>	<i>Names of reporters</i>
Easy exercises when only words had to be corrected or something deleted took about 30 minutes. Those in which some texts needed to be rewritten completely, or something had to be added, or an additional search was required, took up to 60 minutes. But it also depends on me. If I don't have a clear deadline, I am doing things longer than other people	Helen
40 minutes	Norma
Depended on the volume of the exercise	Dina
Between 20 minutes on easy exercises and over 60 minutes on the ones that involved explanations, comments etc.	Julia
20 minutes on average except complicated exercises especially on structuring	Vicky
From 30 minutes to 90 minutes if I had to do them in work time	Edgar
30 minutes on average	Ellie

**Table 49. What would journalists want additional time for**

<i>Question: On what would you spend more time if you had it?</i>	<i>Names of reporters</i>
To read all the paper-based textbook provided before the training. I only read a few chapters and proceeded during the e-training, but never finished	Helen
To train writing news according to the structure	Norma
On finding interesting focus for stories	Vicky
To do more exercises. There are many of them, and I (Julia) could not manage to do some in two or three hours, because it involved a lot of thinking	Dina, Julia, Ellie
The training should be longer	Dina
Imitation of some situations on the forum and discussions of them	Edgar

**Table 50. The most important knowledge and skills obtained at the training**

<i>Question: What was the most important knowledge and skills that you acquired at the training?</i>	<i>Names of reporters</i>
How to structure news	Norma, Julia, Vicky, Edgar, Ellie
What should the content of news be, how to substantiate news	Dina, Edgar, Julia
How to tell journalistic news from PR news and no-news	Vicky, Edgar
How to write news concisely and to the point	Helen, Dina
What journalism is about	Vicky
The need to be objective	Ellie
What critical thinking is	Ellie
How to write news clearly, so that readers understand it	Edgar
How to prioritise news depending on its importance	Edgar
How to communicate with sources	Edgar
How to explain what may be unclear to readers outside our target audience	Julia
How to avoid repetitions and wordiness in stories and officialese	Julia
How to ask questions	Julia
How to attribute including to anonymous sources	Julia
How to find relevant and competent sources	Julia
How to focus news stories	Julia



How to find news	Norma
How to efficiently use time when writing	Dina
Learned to follow political news and understand political processes	Helen

**Table 51. Listing of the issues that remained unclear after the training**

<i>Question: Please list any issues that remained unclear to you and for which you haven't received explanations from the instructor which would satisfy you</i>	<i>Names of reporters</i>
Nothing is ever resolved, there are always things to ask. For instance, I just found out that other reporters understand 'importance' differently to me. I would like to discuss is further	Helen
I got all the necessary explanations, nothing remained unclear	Norma, Julia, Ellie
I understood everything to the extent I am able to understand, and the rest will be acquired with experience. I got all the necessary explanations every time when I needed them	Dina
Everything seems to be clear, but sometimes I cannot transfer my knowledge into practice. But, I think it is a matter of getting more experience. I got all the answers to all my questions	Vicky
How to make my writing even easier, but so that it does not become too primitive, down to the bazaar-type of communication	Edgar

**Table 52. The most complicated issues of the training**

<i>Question: What was the most complicated for you during the e-training?</i>	<i>Names of reporters</i>
The task in which I had to rewrite chunks of my own stories in which I made mistakes	Helen
The need to combine the training with work	Helen
The course was too extensive and large and the time was too short	Norma
I often could not utilise what I learned about substantiating the intro in my own stories despite me trying to follow the instruction and imitate the examples. It was because there was never enough time to concentrate, to learn all the rules, to analyse own mistakes (despite me always doing this)	Julia
Finding interesting focus. I think it is half of the success. I would suggest to create more exercises on this subject	Vicky
To write a story correctly, so that it is not fined for inaccuracies or unfairness	Dina
Psychologically the most complicated issue was assessment. I felt like a pupil in school, and it was not too pleasant. But I don't know how to solve this	Edgar
I found it hard to follow all the hyperlinks in the e-textbook. I think for	Ellie

me reading on paper is easier	
-------------------------------	--

**Table 53. Deficiencies of the e-training**

<i>Deficiencies of the training as perceived by the trainees</i>	<i>Names of reporters</i>
Lack of time, absence of specially allocated time for training. Journalists suggested creating special hours of work to spend on training	Helen, Norma, Julia, Edgar
Insufficient number of exercises	Vicky, Ellie
The biggest deficiency of this training is its online character. I think that face-to-face training would have been more effective	Edgar, Richard
Additional hyperlinks in learning materials. When I clicked on them, I sometimes forgot where I started	Julia, Ellie
Technical problems, when the training website logs off just after I have posted some completed exercises	Dina

**Table 54. Psychological difficulties of the e-training**

<i>Question: What was psychologically the most difficult for you during the e-training? What changes would you suggest be made to avoid such difficulties?</i>	<i>Names of reporters</i>
I was afraid to fail, but you can't change anything to avoid it	Helen
I did not notice any such difficulties	Norma
Expecting the 'sentence' in the form of the assessment of my story. But you can't move forward without it, so I don't think this needs to be changed	Dina
First, it seemed to be criticism, which is, I believe, difficult for any novice. My stories looked like any others, but when you see in the marked copy how many mistakes have been made you start doubting if you are able to write a basic story at all. But you soon realise that if not for the criticism, then you would never understand how to write stories	Julia
The hardest for me was to get engaged. <sup>a</sup> Perhaps I lacked communication by ICQ. But when I started to communicate, I started to understand the sense and the principles of the training	Vicky
I was mostly affected by the assessments, and the fact that assessments of other trainees were not available. I would have been much happier without any assessment, because they are psychologically limiting you	Edgar
The beginning was the most upsetting, because in the first month I could not understand what was required from me, what the story structure means, and so forth.	Ellie

*Note*

<sup>a</sup> See also two ICQ communications including on the subject of engagement in the training with Julia (Appendix 14) and Richard (Appendix 15).

**Table 55. If it was so difficult, why didn't you quit?**

<i>Question: Did you have a desire to quit the training? If yes, how many times? Why haven't you quit?</i>	<i>Names of reporters</i>
I haven't had the will to quit training, rather I wanted to quit the job, and not once... And I am very glad that I decided to stay. I got to like journalism, I like what we are doing and I want to do more of it and to do it better	Helen
No	Norma, Dina, Vicky, Ellie
Yes, two times. But I understood that it would not help my job, and for me the success at my job is the most important thing	Julia
I did not count how many times, but I wanted after you assessed my efforts very low. Especially when I had very low grades because of fines. Every time I was very upset and did not want to train. But I understood that to train is in my interest, that I need to learn and to understand what I should do and how	Edgar

**Table 56. Comparison of the pre-training and post-training ability to write news as perceived by trainees**

<i>Question: Please compare your level of news writing before the training and the level that you achieved</i>	<i>Names of reporters</i>
The training changed everything, because before my knowledge about writing news was absent. Now my level is lower than average, and I need to work more and learn more skills that will help me in news writing	Norma
I knew nothing about writing news before the training, now I can only say that I learned how to do it, but now I need more experience — a lot more than I have now	Dina
I could not write news at all, but now when I compare my stories and western stories about Middle East, I see that there is no big difference. I think my strong side is that I learned how to contextualise news	Julia
I did not have a slight idea about news writing before the training. I think that what changed most of all is my attitude to journalism. Now I understand why I am writing and what I am trying to achieve. I think my level is about 3.5 [out of 5], and I need a lot of experience, the skill with come with practice	Vicky
I can only say that there is a difference [between the level I was at and I am now] and the difference is great. Now I understand everything. Before, I could not even get why all this stuff is needed, but now I understand it	Edgar
Before the training I could not write news, now the news I was writing before looks funny to me. Now when I have a story idea, I get a clear structure in my head and I clearly see where and what I should write. I think I can probably give myself 3 [out of 5] now, out of modesty	Ellie
Void	Helen

**Table 57. Satisfaction with the results of the training**

<i>Question: Assess your satisfaction with the training according to a 5-point scale (1 — minimal, 5 — maximal), and explain your choice</i>	<i>Names of reporters</i>
5. I liked very much the result of the training. I now know for sure how to work with sources, how to write according to the structure, and what the readers want from me	Ellie
4, because I did not manage to read everything that is important and needed. I think that if I had read everything, my achievements would have been higher. But I will read everything now	Helen
4, because no learning can satisfy me to the maximum extent, including in my university	Dina
4, because there were more benefits from this training for my work than harm	Julia
4, because I wasted a lot of time in the beginning of the training. It was difficult for me to understand what it was about and get engaged. And then, I had to catch up and it was difficult. This assessment is linked to my slowness and I am being remorseful	Vicky
4, and could have been 5, if I had more time for the training	Edgar
3, because I worked insufficiently to achieve the results that I wanted	Norma

**Table 58. Suggestions by the graduates on how to improve training**

<i>Question: What would you suggest to improve online training</i>	<i>Names of reporters</i>
I don't think any substantial changes are needed	Norma
Make more exercises and quizzes, and make it mandatory to read the marked stories written by other trainees	Dina
I think there are no weak or ineffective sides, but I would suggest to make more examples and exercises	Julia
Some small details I mentioned above [not use examples which require specific knowledge, not demand to rewrite text with the mistake if too much needs to be rewritten]	Vicky
More examples, more quizzes, more discussions, more freedom, get rid of assessments	Edgar
Get rid of hyperlinks in learning materials	Ellie
Void	Helen

## Appendix 11. Ellie's assessment portfolio

Table 59. Assessments for Ellie's news stories during the online training<sup>a</sup>

-9.00	8.9 141	2.2 231	-33 321f1	0 421	4.5 541	2.6 631	1.5 831	1.3 931	4.3 1041	-1.3 1113d1 1123 1121a1a 1134c1
39.60	8.9 141	2.2 231	3.2 331h1a	5.3 441	2.3 531	2.6 631	1.5 832	1.3 931	4.3 1041	0 1123 1134c1 1124a1 1134d1
-		- 226	- 331h1a							- 1127c1
37.10	13.3 151	2.2 231	6.3 341	2.6 431	4.5 541		3 841	1.3 931	-2.2 1014	-1.3 1113d1 1121d1 1123 1127c1
-14.10	4.4 132b1	-33 226	3.2 331h1a	5.3 441	0 521a1b	2.6 631	1.5 832	1.3 931	2.2 1033	-1.3 1113b1 1121a1 1113d1 1127c1b 1121a1a
-71.90	-4.4 111d1 123	-33 223	-33 321e1 331h1a	-2.6 412	-2.3 512		1.5 832	1.3 931	2.2 1034a1	-1.3 1114a1 1115 1124a1
-	- 151	- 222b1 227 222	- 331	- 434a1	- 532		- 832	- 921b1	- 1017	- 1113d1 1127c1 1111a2 1111a1
-110.60	-4.4 111d1	-33 227 223 222b1	-67 311c1 321	-2.6 412	0 521a1a	2.6 631	1.5 832	0 924	0 1021b1 1013d1 1033	0 1121a1 1127c1b 1121 1121d1

<sup>a</sup> The original table on the website uses colours with the internationally understood logic of the traffic lights: from deep red, 'unacceptable' level, to light red 'inappropriate' level, to orange, 'acceptable' and yellow 'good' level, to green in the 'outstanding' level.

Other notes:

The numbers in the row above list the criteria in the order they are listed in the NTA (1 — 'newsworthiness'; 2 — 'accuracy and credibility'; 3 — 'objectivity as a method'; etc.)

The left column shows total scores.

The portfolio lists assessments containing big fines, which can be seen in the 3rd and the 4th columns on the left.

The first digit of every code is the number of the criterion, the second — the number of the level from ‘unacceptable’ (1) to ‘outstanding’ (5), and the third digit is the number of the descriptor<sup>135</sup>.

Ellie is a native Russian speaker and wrote her stories in Russian.

All the codes are clickable on the website of the training.

The scores in grey along the lines with the total scores show the scores awarded for the quality of performance in different criteria.

Two stories which do not have overall assessment scores were marked at Ellie’s request before the submissions of fortnightly stories for full marking and assessment. She was using them to enlarge her learning experiences beyond the mandatory 8 stories during the training.

Ellie also asked to assess and mark three stories after the training completed. The three stories at the top of the table have been done within a year of the end of training.

---

<sup>135</sup> See the description of the coding system in chapter 4

## Appendix 12. Helen's assessment portfolio

Table 60. Assessments for Helen's news stories during the online training

Total	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
24.00	8.9 141	4.3 241	3.2 331	2.6 434b1	0 521a1b 522a1			1.5 832	1.3 931	2.2 1032	0 1121a1a 1123 1124a1 1111a1	0 1226e1	0 1323d1 1323b1a
33.30	8.9 141	2.2 231	3.2 331h1a	2.6 431	2.3 531			3 841	2.5 941	2.2 1033	-1.3 1115 1113d1 1124a1 1123 1121a1a 1123 1121a1 1127e1	4 1234b1	3.7 1331
45.70	13.3 151	4.3 241	3.2 331	5.3 441	2.3 531	2.6 631		3 841	1.3 931	4.3 1041	-1.3 1113a1	0 1226e1	7.4 1341
0.60	13.3 151	-33 222 222b1	3.2 331h1a	2.6 431	2.3 531			1.5 832	0 921b1	4.3 1041	-1.3 1111a1 1123 1115 1113d1 1121a2 1121a1a	4 1231	3.7 1331
34.20	8.9 141	2.2 233	3.2 331h1a	2.6 431	2.3 531			1.5 832	2.5 941	4.3 1041	-1.3 1113d1 1115 1127c1c 1121a3 1121b1a 1121d1 1134c1	8 1241	0 1323b1a
-30.70	-4.4 111	-33 224 227 224a1	3.2 331	5.3 441	-2.3 512 521a1a			1.5 832	0 921d1 931	4.3 1041	-1.3 1113c1 1123 1124a1 1111a1	-4 1212	0 1323c1
-61.00	8.9 141	-33 223	-33 321d1 321e1 322	-2.6 412	0 521a1b			1.5 832	2.5 941	0 1024	-1.3 1111a2a 1124a1 1113d1 1127c1c 1121a1a 1121a1 1121a2 1123c1 1121	-4 1212d1	0 1322 1323
-26.90	-4.4 117	2.2 231	-33 322 331	0 421b1	0 521			0 821	0 921b1	4.3 1041	0 1121a1b 1123 1127d1	4 1234b1	0 1324
-28.30	-4.4 111e1	-33 223 226	3.2 331	0 421b1	-2.3 512			1.5 832	0 921b1	0 1026a1	-1.3 1113c1 1121a1 1127d1	8 1041	0 1323e1

The notes are the same as the notes for the table above.

## Appendix 13. Julia's assessment portfolio

Table 61. Assessments for Julia's news stories during the online training

-31.50	-4.4 111d1	2.2 231	-33 321h1 331h1a	2.6 431	2.3 531	2.6 631	1.5 832	0 921a1 921b1	0 1024	-1.3 1113d1 1134c1 1112b1 1123 1134c1 1111a2 1113d1 1113c1	-4 1212c1 1226c1	0 1322
-71.00	0 123b1	-33 222b1	-33 321d1 322b1 322		0 522d1				0 1024 1021c1	-1.3 1115 1114a1 1112b1 1123		-3.7 1311a1a 1324b1 1324 1322
-96.50	8.9 141	-67 211a1 223 226 221b1 224b1	-33 324a1 331h1a	-2.6 412	2.3 531		1.5 832	-1.3 911b1	0 1021b1	-1.3 1115 1121a1a 1127c1c 1121a1 1123 1124a1 1113d1 1113c1	-4 1215c1	0 1323f1 1323g1 1323b1a 1323b1
-43.90	-4.4 111e1	-33 221 223 224 221b1		-2.6 412	-2.3 512		1.5 932	0 921b1	2.2 1033	-1.3 1113d1 1121a1a 1123 1127c1 1127c1	-4 1212d1	0 1324 1323
-60.70	8.9 141	-33 222	-33 321f1 331h1a	-2.6 412 421	0 521		0 821	2.5 941	-2.2 1013c1 1033	-1.3 1111a2a 1121a1a 1111a1 1113d1	0 1223a1	0 1324 1323
-	141	221b1 224	321d1 324a1	412	522c1a 522c1b	621	832	921	1013c1	1115 1134c1 1123 1113c1 1124a1 1113d1 1124a1 1134d1	1215a1	1322 1323
-39.60	-4.4 111e1 124	-33 223	3.2 331	-2.6 412	0 521		1.5 832	2.5 941	2.2 1034a1	-1.3 1111a2a 1123	-4 1213	-3.7 1311a1a 1324 1323b1 1314
-79.30	-4.4 111e1	-67 211a1 222	3.2 331	0 421b1	-2.3 512		1.5 831	-1.3 912	0 1024 1034b1 1013c1	-1.3 1111a2 1127c1 1127c1a 1121a1 1121d1 1121d1	-4 1216	-3.7 1314 1323b1
-115.10	-4.4 117	-67 211a1 222	-33 324a1 331h1a	-2.6 412	-2.3 512	2.6 632	1.5 832	1.3 931	-2.2 1013d1	-1.3 1111a2 1123 1124a4 1134b1	-4 1215a1	-3.7 1314 1323b1 1322 1323a1 1324

The notes are the same as at the two tables above. Julia is bilingual Azeri-Russian and writes for the Agency in Russian.



Julia filed 6 stories for assessment and marking after the completion of the training at her initiative.

Source: Website of the online training tool (<http://nta.alterwebs.com/>). Access for authorised users only.

**Table 62. Assessments for Julia's news stories filed after completion of the online training**

Total	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
-13.80	13.3 151	-33 223 234a1	3.2 331	0 421	0 522a1			1.5 832	2.5 941	0 1026a1	-1.3 1111a1 1127c1 1123 1124a1	0 1223	0 1323d1 1323b1a 1323b1a 1323d1 1323e1
-21.90	8.9 141	-33 222b1 222 224b1	3.2 331h1a	-2.6 411a1 433	2.3 531			1.5 831	1.3 931	-2.2 1014 1021	-1.3 1111a2 1113c1	0 1124a1 1221c1 1124a4 1123 1121d1 1121	0 1323b1a
-43.00	8.9 141	-33 222 222b1	-33 324a1	2.6 431	0 521a1a	2.6 631		1.5 832	2.5 941	2.2 1034c1	-1.3 1115 1127c1 1123 1111a1	4 1234b1	0 1324b1 1324
-7.00	8.9 141	-33 226b1	3.2 331h1a	0 421b1 434a1	0 521	2.6 631		3 841	1.3 931	4.3 1041	-1.3 1113c1 1124a1 1121a1	4 1231	0 1324b1 1324 1323d1
-39.30	-4.4 111e1	-33 224a1	3.2 331	-2.6 412	0 521			1.5 832	-1.3 911c1	0 1024 1033	1.3 1131	-4 1213	0 1323 1323d1 1324b1
-36.40		-33 321h1		-2.6 412 434a1	-2.3 512			0 822	2.5 941	0 1024	-1.3 1111a2 1111a2a 1121b1a 1121a1 1121b1 1123 1126 1134c1 1112b1	4 1231	-3.7 1314 1324

Source: Website of the online training tool (<http://nta.alterwebs.com/>). Access for authorised users only.

#### **Appendix 14. Transcript of an ICQ conversation between Julia and the instructor. Nov, 28, 2008**

22:34:32 hello, Yevgenia

22:34:51 how are you in the far New Zealand?

22:34:55 Yevgenia: hello

22:35:00 Yevgenia: everything is fine

22:35:12 what is the weather like?

22:35:18 Yevgenia: it's windy

22:35:32 are your winters cold?

22:36:04 Yevgenia: down to zero here

22:36:12 Yevgenia: not cold

22:37:18 Yevgenia, I have a question: do I have to do exercises which I have already done in my previous marked stories?

22:37:51 Yevgenia: If you make the same mistakes repeatedly, let's think what is better to do

22:38:03 Yevgenia: but don't do the same exercise more than two times

22:38:26 Yevgenia: I can make you a new exercise, or let's discuss what is better to do, maybe you don't understand something

22:38:59 the problem is that when I compare my answers with the correct answer they are often very similar

22:39:36 Yevgenia: so the problem is that you can't use what you learned in your next stories?

22:39:59 Yevgenia: but do you think over it or do it all mechanically?

22:40:07 judging by the marked stories, mechanically

22:40:19 Yevgenia: but why, what do you think?

22:40:48 after I make exercises I get quite another idea about how that story should have been written

22:40:57 a lot becomes clear

22:41:08 Yevgenia: and then?

22:41:14 Yevgenia: after things become clear?

22:41:30 when I write my next story I already try to use facts and not just words

22:42:34 Yevgenia: well, it had to take time for you to understand that every word you write should be supported by some evidence

22:42:48 Yevgenia: do you keep a diary of the training?

22:42:52 no

22:43:03 Yevgenia: that's a problem

22:43:12 but I will do it, I promise, because it is needed

22:43:14 I should keep it

22:43:20 Yevgenia: it looks like all these weeks of training have been wasted

22:43:55 Yevgenia: because when you have so much new information, it is very hard, impossible for the human brain to remember everything, and that is where the problems appear

22:44:09 agreed

22:44:22 Yevgenia: I asked you many times that you record your conclusions, and read it every day

22:44:37 I read old exercises

22:44:44 which I have done previously

22:44:46 Yevgenia: well, if you refresh regularly, you have a chance to memorise it, and only after this we can talk about using new knowledge for writing

22:45:10 Yevgenia: there are nearly a thousand various materials and exercises on the site

22:45:14 I promise I will start a diary

22:45:14 only I will do it my way

22:45:26 I will not write

22:45:29 but make schemes

22:45:39 it is easier for me to do it this way

22:45:55 Yevgenia: do whatever you find comfortable — only record new things and re-read them

22:46:16 Yevgenia: you should not just understand new things, you should memorise them

22:46:21 Yevgenia: and for this, you need to repeat

22:46:24 yeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeees

22:46:30 Yevgenia: ok

22:46:35 Yevgenia: :-)

22:46:43 I understood it recently

22:46:54 Yevgenia: ok

22:47:17 I had a mad day yesterday

22:48:26 I spoke with the vice-speaker of Iraq, and just as wanted to post the story an alert came that they signed a security agreement

22:48:54 Yevgenia: s\* happens

22:48:55 I had to rewrite the story!

22:49:05 Yevgenia: sorry about it

22:49:34 but I still gave my story with the vice-speaker, too

22:50:36 ok, I would not burden you with the extra information

22:50:43 Yevgenia: thanks

22:51:03 will start working

22:53:44 Yevgenia: ok

00:40:30 Yevgenia, I have a question

00:40:38 Yevgenia: ?

00:40:51 Can we make the editor's note in brackets in the story?

00:41:03 Yevgenia: no

00:41:08 Yevgenia: what is it exactly?

00:42:26 for instance

00:42:28 I was told in an interview about an Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit

00:42:42 and I want to tell when he was taken prisoner

00:42:51 Ah, should I do it as explanatory information?

00:42:59 Yevgenia: of course, this is a usual explanatory context

00:43:06 ok

00:43:31 Yevgenia: you can just say after the comma, smth like Shalit, who was taken prisoner at this date

00:45:02 no, it is in the paragraph where my expert speaks

00:45:13 where he talks about Shalit

00:45:57 Yevgenia: then give it as a short separate paragraph

00:46:05 ok, thanks.

## **Appendix 15. Transcript of an ICQ conversation between Richard and the instructor. Oct. 6, 2008**

22:40:58 Yevgenia, hello

22:41:02 How are you?

22:41:20 Yevgenia: I am fine, and you?

22:41:32 Just got better after illness:(

22:41:44 Yevgenia: flu?

22:41:50 Cold, sore throat

22:41:57 Yevgenia: bad

22:41:59 I drink too much cold water

22:42:01 Yevgenia: no complications?

22:42:10 painful to eat :(

22:42:18 no complications so far

22:42:27 Yevgenia: drink warm water now!

22:42:33 I wanted to thank you for your tolerance and your letter [through the website] :)

22:42:38 yes, will drink warm water now :)

22:43:01 and I have a question

22:43:04 Yevgenia: ?

22:43:28 You said in the letter that such news as the one about mission from CIS are better not to write at all [he wrote an account of the visit of the mission of election observers to Azerbaijan whose head told him that everything was fine with the preparations for the presidential elections]

22:43:42 how I was supposed to formulate the importance of that news

22:43:59 so that the readers could be aware of the activities of the monitoring group?

22:44:16 Yevgenia: but why do you need to write about the visit if there is no clear result of their work

22:44:31 Yevgenia: or anything else newsworthy?

22:44:59 but there aren't any results, because as opposed to the OSCE monitoring mission this one does not announce any intermediate results

22:45:08 Yevgenia: whatever is fine and within the norm is not newsworthy. News is written about what differs from the norm, about new unexpected things

22:45:40 Yevgenia: so what if some mission went somewhere and saw something?

22:46:10 but what if the audience asks why the CIS mission doesn't say anything?

22:46:32 Yevgenia: do they even know that it was in Baku to ask this question?

22:47:13 they do, because this story was the follow-up on the previous one about the arrival of this mission

22:47:54 Yevgenia: then you can follow it up of course, but you still need to find a newsworthy focus

22:48:01 Yevgenia: perhaps, in the past, the situation with the preparations for elections was terrible, and, say, polling stations were unprepared or anything else was bad, and now everything is fine and this was unexpected? You need to prove the newsworthiness

22:48:16 Huh, yes, you are right

22:48:35 Yevgenia: read the file 111a6

22:48:42 Yevgenia: about news values

22:48:56 so you mean that for instance I needed to give information about the previous visits if their results are seriously different from the current, right?

22:49:10 Yevgenia: yes, you could have given the context called 'problem of the situation in which news unfolds'

22:49:25 Yevgenia: then it would have been clear why the story was written

22:49:27 yes, I read that file, I only wanted to understand how it applies to this particular case

22:49:49 right, this is my mistake, my story would have been more valuable if I had put it in context

22:49:54 Yevgenia: you should make an effort to interpret every piece of theory into your specific cases

22:50:14 you are right, I just wanted you to explain everything in details about this case :)

22:50:23 Yevgenia: you wrote me a while ago that what this training teaches is 'VERY FAR FROM WHAT I AM WRITING'

22:50:37 I was mistaken then

22:50:41 Yevgenia: just note that the theory gives general ideas

22:50:55 I should have said that what you teach is 'VERY FAR FROM WHAT I AM BEING TOLD TO WRITE ABOUT' :)

22:51:08 Yevgenia: :-(

22:51:13 Yevgenia: what are you being told to write about???

22:51:18 sorry, I am kidding :)

22:51:56 actually I have reassessed the training and concluded that I need it very much

22:52:09 Yevgenia: well, at last...

22:52:25 Yevgenia: then start working!

## Appendix 16. A handout for reporters on the different variety of contexts

**Table 63. Different types of contextual and explanatory information in news stories <sup>a</sup>**

Name of the context	Content
Types of key contexts or explanations that must be used at the top of the story or in the intro because they explain why news is worth reading	
Importance	Explains why news is important
Problem situation	Explains problem that news creates
Problem in which news unfolds	Explains the problem in which news unfolds
Event context	Links the news to another event which in some important way relates to the main news, but which may not be directly connected. It is not the answer to the ‘why did it happen’ question
Contexts that can be located anywhere in the text, including combined with key contexts, as they explain the specific points	
Background, or historical context	History preceding the news
Explanatory context (explanatory information)	Block, sentence or a few words woven into the text that explain or remind of information related to the main news item
Geographical context	Locates the ‘where’ information geographically by linking the place to well-known spots
Statistical context	Relevant statistics
Comparisons	Compares items in news with something familiar to readers. Especially helpful to use with large numbers
Digital context	Digital trend. Comparison of the previous and the current figures and statistics
Political context	Explains the specific political situation in the country in which news unfolds
Geopolitical context	Explains the specific political situation in a geopolitical region in which news unfolds
International context	Explains the specific global situation in which news unfolds
Economic context	Explains the specific economic situation in the country in which news unfolds
Geoeconomic context	Explains the specific economic situation in

	the geoeconomical zone in which news unfolds
Religious context	Explains the specific religious situation in which news unfolds

<sup>a</sup> Most of these contexts are in detail explained in the SET